DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 480 829 CE 085 479

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|---|---|
| TITLE | Learning Local Environmental Knowledge: A Volunteer's Guide to Community Entry [and] Learning Local Environmental Knowledge: Training Manual. |
| INSTITUTION | Peace Corps, Washington, DC. Information Collection and Exchange Div. |
| REPORT NO | ICE-M0071 |
| PUB DATE | 2002-09-00 |
| NOTE | 107p. |
| AVAILABLE FROM | For full text (training manual): http://www.peacecorps.gov/library/pdf/T0126_llekmanual.pdf. For full text (volunteer guide): http://www.peacecorps.gov/library/pdf/M0071_llekguide.pdf. |
| PUB TYPE | Guides - Classroom - Learner (051) -- Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052) |
| EDRS PRICE | EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS |
| DESCRIPTORS | Adult Education; *Community Development; Community Resources; *Cross Cultural Training; Cultural Awareness; Developing Nations; *Economic Climate; Foreign Countries; Instructional Materials; Intercultural Communication; Learning Activities; Local History; Local Issues; Natural Resources; *Physical Environment; Service Learning; *Social Environment; Teaching Guides; *Volunteer Training; Volunteers |
| IDENTIFIERS | *Peace Corps |

ABSTRACT

These two publications fill the need of newly posted Peace Corps volunteers (PCVs) for self-directed learning activities to aid the community entry process. A volunteer's guide provides a way to learn about biophysical, economic, and social aspects of the host community during the first few months of service. It has ideas and activities for discovering practices, perceptions, beliefs, values, people, and other local resources with which development actions can be built. The method helps them explore and discover how community members perceive and relate to their local natural resource base. Learning activities in three areas--biophysical, economic, and social environment--rely on these four tools: communication, observation, action, reflection. Each activity has some or all of these parts: why do this, what to do, key questions, now what, tips, adaptations/alternatives, and what worked. Additional activities are appended. The complementary training manual suggests ways to introduce the guide to PCVs in Pre-Service Training (PST). Section 1 discusses volunteer learning and community entry. Section 2 has designs for four PST sessions called local environmental knowledge warm-up; doing an activity--biophysical; doing an activity--economic; and the volunteer guide and project framework. Section 3 has designs for these two inservice training sessions: (1) volunteer presentations and reviews and (2) review of quarterly reports. Session information consists of some or all of these components: overview, objectives, time required, participants, trainer/trainee preparation, activity procedure, additional options, and reflection questions. (YLB)

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# LEARNING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE

## A VOLUNTEER'S GUIDE TO COMMUNITY ENTRY

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# LEARNING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE

## A VOLUNTEER'S GUIDE TO COMMUNITY ENTRY

**PEACE CORPS**
**SEPTEMBER 2002**

INFORMATION COLLECTION
AND EXCHANGE
ICE #M0071

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* was produced in recognition of the cross-cultural challenges faced by Volunteers during their first three months of service. Volunteers and associate Peace Corps directors identified the need for self-directed learning activities to assist and accelerate the process of community entry. This guide responds to that need.

The Peace Corps profoundly appreciates the reviews of this publication and the suggestions made by hundreds of Peace Corps staff and Volunteers worldwide during a two-year design and development phase. More than 700 draft copies of this guide were requested by field staff in Africa, Central and South America, the Caribbean, the Pacific, Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Mediterranean for use and testing in Pre-Service Training. The positive feedback to the draft documents during that period provided the inspiration to publish and disseminate this guide.

# INTRODUCTION

Many communities where Volunteers like you live and work are rural and agricultural. Not surprisingly, people in these communities are usually aware of the link between their local environment and their own well-being. Their environmental practices, perceptions, beliefs, knowledge, and values often reflect this link. Consequently, their understanding of new ideas about development will depend on how those concepts "fit" with what they already believe and practice. Because so many rural communities rely on local natural resources for their livelihood, Volunteers like you can use the local environment as a point of departure for learning about your community. Communities that are urban and commercial in character can be discovered in a similar way, although the environmental perceptions of rural and urban dwellers will naturally differ.

The purpose of this guide, therefore, is to provide you with a simple way to learn about the biophysical, economic, and social aspects of your host community during your first several months of service. The method will help you explore and discover how community members perceive and relate to their local natural resource base. As you learn about your host community's relationship with the local environment, you will find yourself increasingly "community-literate" about local practices and livelihood strategies. In other words, you will become a more valuable community asset for development.

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# USING THIS GUIDE

The learning activities suggested in this guide rely on four tools:

**Communication** between you and the members of your community, other Volunteers, your associate Peace Corps director (APCD), Peace Corps staff, and host country agencies and individuals. There are any number of "people resources" available to you. Each person will have unique and valuable perspectives to offer. Often, especially in your first month or so of service, you simply need to be a good listener to communicate and learn. And as your language skills improve, so will your understanding of community life.

**Observation** of people and work activities in the community. You are likely to find yourself relying heavily on observation to learn about your community during the first few months of service. Consistent use of your observation skills will renew your curiosity from day to day, and that will fuel your learning.

**Action**, a powerful learning tool. Many people find that movement and physical exercise enhance their learning. Working alongside people in their fields, shops, and homes will help you forge relationships and become a familiar community figure. This will make people more comfortable to be around you and will encourage them to share their knowledge with you.

**Reflection** on what you see, hear, feel, and smell, to help you understand more fully your host community, its assets, and its needs. There are as many ways to reflect on an experience as there are Volunteers. You can write about your experiences, as many Volunteers do. You might also like to express your learning in other ways. Many Volunteers take photographs, make sketches, or write songs or poetry. Some record sounds and voices on tape. Whatever method you choose, thinking in a focused way about your day-to-day experiences will multiply your learning and enhance your communication skills.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

The most important thing to remember about this guide is to **use it in ways that best suit you and your community**. Adapt the suggested activities to your circumstances and personality. At the end of each activity there are "Reflection Questions" that will help you collect your thoughts and process your learning before you move on to the next session. Be creative in documenting your thoughts as you engage in activities and respond to the questions. Again, remember to:

- Build trust with your community by being open and honest. Maintain confidentiality when appropriate.
- Be mindful of your criticisms and assumptions and discuss them with your colleagues.
- Be aware of how your perceptions change by reviewing old notes.
- Adapt the guide to your circumstances.
- Enjoy yourself!

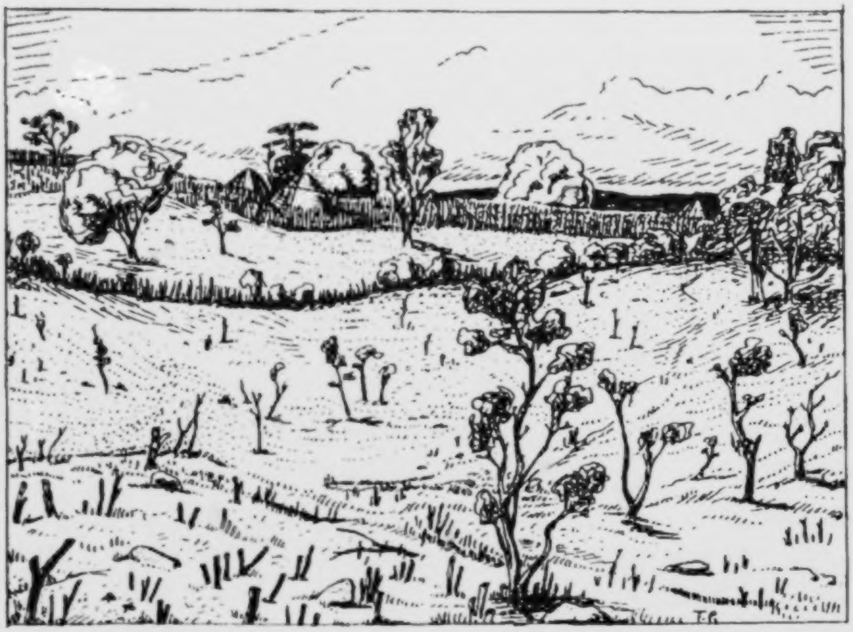
## A NOTE ON WORKING WITH YOUTH

Volunteers who work with youth often find participants who are eager to learn and to contribute their passion, energy, and creativity. Many Volunteers find that working with youth is inspirational as well as productive. Although Volunteers seem to gravitate toward working with youth, not that many have had extensive experience working with young people prior to their Peace Corps service. Below are some general principles for working with youth.

- Build on the assets of youth such as enthusiasm, energy, optimism, and hope
- Avoid focusing exclusively on "problems" but rather focus on issues, challenges, opportunities, and assets
- Create opportunities for youth to contribute to their community in constructive ways, even if modest
- Encourage young people to take responsibility for their actions and ideas
- Strengthen feelings of belonging and service to the community
- Use young people's personal experiences as a tool for teaching
- Start small and work up to larger expectations
- Build competencies and develop self-esteem
- Teach self-direction
- Involve committed parents and other adults to work with youth
- Link youth efforts with larger community development and change efforts

# BIOPHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

"Biophysical" refers to the local land, water, air, and vegetation resources. The biophysical environment is a good starting point for learning about your community because it includes tangible assets that are common to practically all community members. You can see, touch, and sometimes smell things like trees, animals, soil types, topography, and water sources. The biophysical environment also refers to the climate (wind, rain, temperature) and how it shapes the local environment. Having a sense of the biophysical environment will help you understand the conditions in which your community functions, and why some practices and perceptions exist. While the regional ecology is unquestionably important, try focusing on learning about the local natural resources in and around your community.



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# 1 COMMUNITY WALKS

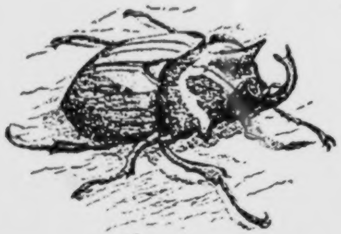
## WHY DO THIS?

Community walks make you more visible and familiar to people. You may feel like you're living in a fishbowl already, but staying in and around your house may arouse people's curiosity even more. There's no escaping your "celebrity status" anyway, so make the most of it. When people see you out and about, they see that you are just a normal person and become increasingly used to you. In time, they will feel more comfortable showing you what they think is important to know.

## WHAT TO DO

Ask your neighbor, your community work partners, or other initial contacts in the community to lead you on guided tours of the community. Tell them that you would like to learn about what and who are in the community. Let your questions flow based on what you see, taste, feel, and smell. Pursue a line of inquiry that takes cues and follows what is pointed out to you. Focus on how natural resources are used. Learn to ask simple questions in local or national languages such as:

- What is that…soil/plant/animal/insect/structure/body of water?
- How is it useful to people?
- Who in the community uses it?



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## TIPS

- Be sensitive to the time constraints and workloads of people.
- Be aware that you will receive different information from different people. You may want to set up walks with men and women of varying ages, ethnic groups, or income levels.
- Mentally note what generates discussion even if you do not understand what is being said. Listen and pay attention to body language. Pick out words that you hear often.

## ADAPTATIONS/ALTERNATIVES

- Ask a group of people to take you on a tour, and note the various interactions between people.
- Go to a local gathering spot with a mental list of questions.
- Ask the kids who inevitably appear on your doorstep to take you on a tour and introduce you to their parents.
- If you are in an urban area, ask some community partners to take you around the neighborhood or to the market. Ask about the natural resources you see.

## WHAT WORKED FOR YOU?

Think or write about what was enjoyable, what was successful and why, what wasn't, what you found interesting, what was confusing, and what you learned.

# NOTES

# 2 SKETCHES

## WHY DO THIS?

Creating a series of map and landscape sketches sharpens your observation skills and helps you monitor your learning by documenting changes in what you observe. Maps can also help you understand how your environmental perceptions compare and contrast with those of people in your community.

## WHAT TO DO

In your own way, sketch a set of maps that illustrate the natural areas and features that seem significant to you. Don't worry about being perfect. Highlight the ecology of the area and significant natural resources. Note the differences in soil types, slopes, drainage, vegetation, water bodies and sources, wind direction, etc. Sharpen your observation skills by walking around the community without a notebook, exploring one area well, and making mental notes about the resources and structures that you see. Return to your home and sketch the map from memory. Continue doing this weekly or biweekly until you feel well acquainted with the physical layout and characteristics of your community. Compare your early and later maps; look at how your learning is reflected in your maps.

## KEY QUESTIONS

- What production systems have you seen (home gardens, nurseries, field crops)?
- Are there changes in vegetation composition and topography in and around your community? Describe these.

- What are the various landscapes (forested, hilly, rocky, etc.) and uses for different landscape forms?
- How many ground/surface water sources did you find? Who uses which sources, and for what purposes?
- Can you come up with theories on why the community is located and oriented geographically the way it is?

## NOW WHAT?

Show your maps to a few people with whom you feel comfortable. Try to include men and women in your inquiries. Explain what you have done and ask people to show you where mistakes have been made or what should be changed.

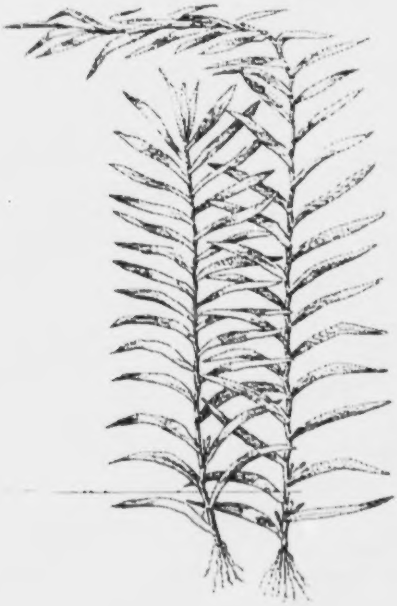
## TIPS

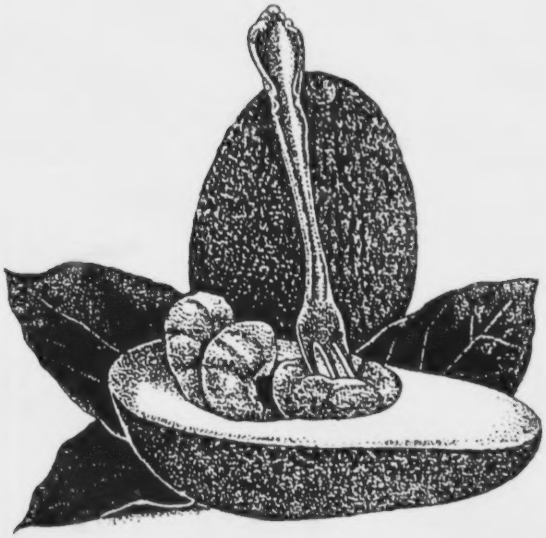
- Note what map features seem to be important to individuals and groups. Note differences in people's perceptions of the map on a separate piece of paper, or on the map itself.
- As you explain the concept of the map to community members, keep in mind that the "bird's eye" perspective may not be familiar to them. Think of creative ways to explain and be patient with yourself.

## ADAPTATIONS/ALTERNATIVES

- Take photographs of the landscape and ask people to explain the features they see in them.
- In urban areas, map out your neighborhood or the local market. Note topography, water sources, etc. You may want to note urban gardens or other production systems you see.
- Ask some schoolchildren to help you draw maps. You may want to see if it's possible to acquire maps from government agencies so you and the group can discuss what the position of the community is in relation to the larger geographic area.

## NOTES





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# 3

# COMMUNITY MENTORS

## WHY DO THIS?

To cultivate relationships with individuals in the community who are respected and recognized as knowledgeable about the local environment. These relationships will help you build your own reliable set of information about local natural resources.

## WHAT TO DO

Ask a neighbor, community work partner, colleague, or friend to help you identify people in the community known for the good quality work they perform using local natural resources (blacksmiths, traditional healers, beekeepers, dairy producers and marketers, fruit and vegetable growers, herders, teachers, etc). Ask to be introduced to these local experts. Some might become your mentors. Spend one day with each of four or five potential mentors in the community. Observe which resources they use and make mental notes. When the time feels right, turn your observations into action and perform some of the same activities as your mentors, depending on your interest. Try to obtain a sense of where and how these mentors spend their time. Be prepared with questions like these:

- How do you select which (trees/plants/insects/etc.) are the best to use in your work?
- How does the your work change with the seasons?
- When are the best times of the year to find/obtain/buy these resources? Where are they found?

## NOW WHAT?

Think and write about your experience working with mentors.

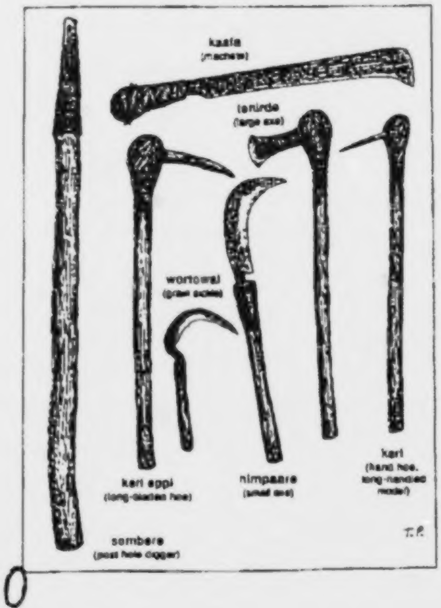
- What in particular impresses you about your mentors?
- What did you learn from your mentors about natural resource management that you had not previously realized?
- What new information do you think your mentors could use to improve their specialized work?

## TIPS

- Be sure to spend time with women and men, and with people of different ethnicity and means (as best you can determine without asking personal questions).
- At first, "shadow" (spend the day with) a neighbor or someone with whom you feel comfortable.

## ADAPTATIONS/ALTERNATIVES

- Take photographs or draw the tools used by your mentors. Find out what the tools are used for, which are most useful, and whether or not they are designed and made locally.
- On the maps you've made, note the places where you and your mentors went. How are the areas you visited with your men-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keri appi
(long-bladed hoe)
nimpaare
(small axe)
keri
(hand hoe,
long-handled
model)
sombere
(post hole digger)
T.P.

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tors similar to and different from each other? Which natural resources exist there?

- If you are a teacher or environmental educator, ask your students to do a community research project and to identify the experts in the community and their area of expertise. Begin to create a community knowledge sourcebook.

**NOTES**

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# 4 TRADITIONAL TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

## WHY DO THIS?

To learn community members' traditional technical knowledge base about natural resource management and with whom it resides in the community.

## WHAT TO DO

### – LOCAL VEGETATION

This activity can be initiated with different groups in the community that include young people, women, and others. Ask participants to interview elderly people in their homes on plant-related topics. You might consult local teachers or your community partners to develop a list of plant-related themes from which the participants can choose. The idea is for participants (and you) to learn how different community members traditionally value and use their local plants. Individual participants might create a way to represent (drawing, singing, dancing, etc.) what they have learned. Examples of possible themes for learning activities are:

- Trees and Grasses Important to My Family and Me
- Ten Important Medicinal Plants in Our Community
- A Story/Myth About a Plant

## TIPS

- Work with a local professional who has an interest in environmental education.
- Encourage participants to interview women as well as men.

## ADAPTATIONS/ALTERNATIVES

- Construct a plant press from local materials and do a pressed plant collection. See the "Activities for Further Learning" at the end of this guide to learn how to make a plant press.
- In urban areas, go to the market and identify the plant resources you see and ask about where they come from. Also note wood fuel sources, and try to find out where they come from. Note any trees or plants that seem to be intentionally maintained or preserved around your neighborhood. Are there any groups that are responsible for or interested in preserving or cultivating plants in the urban environment? Are there any laws governing how and when trees may be cut? What organizations or literature can you find that addresses local plant species?
- Do the same type of activity, but focus on domestic animals.

## WHAT TO DO

### – LOCAL INSECTS

Involve a group of children in a game to collect five to 10 insects of which they know the specific local name. Bring them together for a group discussion so they can share with you and each other their knowledge concerning the insects' habits. Think of a creative way to compile and display the results. Cross-reference the information with elders in the community. Some relevant questions for the discussion are:

- What is the local name of this insect? Does this name mean anything in particular?
- What are the names of the body parts in the local language?

- What does this insect eat?
- What eats this insect?
- What is the insect's life cycle?
- What time of year is the insect most plentiful? Why?
- Do people think this is a good or bad insect? Why?
- Do people try to control this insect? How?
- Does this insect have a relationship with any particular plant or animal?
- Are there any proverbs about this insect?

## TIPS

- Out-of-school youth may know a lot about local natural resources because they work in the surrounding environment to help support their family.
- Try not to settle for one or two answers about any insect. Try to gather as many notions about the insects as possible.

## ADAPTATIONS/ALTERNATIVES

- If people's knowledge about an insect seems limited, don't be discouraged. Someone in a neighboring community may know more. Or, focus on another insect in your discussions.
- Use the insect exercise as an environmental education activity whereby, in working with youth, you identify, research, and catalog the insects around the community. Try to display the different insects in some form (bug boxes, photographs, drawings) and ask members of the community to share what they know about the insects. Folks in the community may think you're a little odd at first, but the young people will be very proud of their work in the end.

# 5 TIME TO REFLECT

## WHY REFLECT ON YOUR ACTIVITIES?

Below are suggestions and questions you can ask yourself to help clarify and direct your learning. Don't try to address them all at once. Look them over, keep them in mind, and act on or answer those that interest you. Add your own questions based on your interests and learning. Try writing about some of the more complex questions. You'll surprise yourself about how much you've learned. Pick a few questions and try to visually represent your learning in some way, any way, that you enjoy. Ask your community partners to help you, and think about displaying your results to other community members. Focus on what the community has to offer, rather than on what it lacks.

- Describe the vegetation type in and around your community. Is it woody, grassland, mixed, or something else? Are the trees thorny, leafy, tall? Are the grasses green or parched? Why do you think the vegetation has developed this way?
- Describe the season that the community is now experiencing. Is it rainy, dry, windy, dusty, cool, torrid, or something else? What are some things that you like and dislike about the current season? How do you foresee the current season changing in the next several months, if at all?
- Did you identify any trees or herbaceous plants that you think might be *leguminous* (Hint: these plants often have long seed pods, bean-like seeds, compound leaves)? How are these plants valued and used by the community?
- Make a list of the natural resources in the community. Which resources do you think are valued most by community members? Ask a few people to list their "Top 5" natural resources. Do the lists differ significantly among men, women, girls,

boys? If so, why do you suppose this is? Ask your neighbors and work partners what they think.

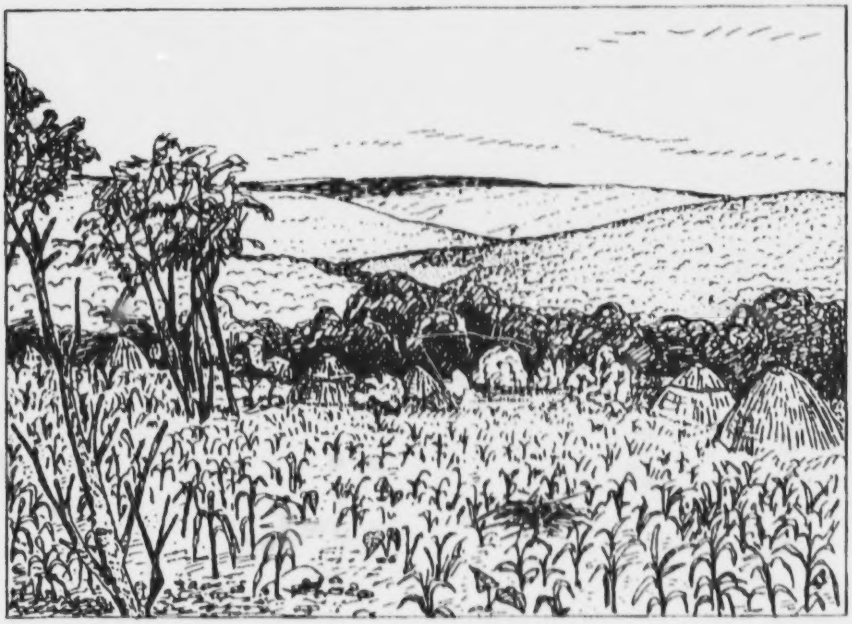
- Do men and women seem to have different knowledge and values about the natural resources in and around the community? If so, what is your explanation for this?
- What soils are in the community? Describe these by name, color, texture (sandy, silty, claylike), landscape position (upland, lowland, mid-slope), crops grown, and other identifying features cited by local people.
- Do landscape features (hills, valleys, rock outcrops, forest, grassland, riversides) seem to affect land use? In what way?
- What has impressed you most about the people in your community regarding their knowledge of natural resources?
- How does the natural environment shape the daily lives of community members? Think about the effect of water sources, hills and valleys, forest areas, and grasslands on the way people conduct their activities during a typical week.
- How does your own knowledge of ecology compare (is similar) and contrast (is different) with the environmental knowledge of the people in your community?

## TIPS

- Review your learning so far. Note points that are unclear, conflicting, and especially interesting, areas where you might be mistaken, doubts, when or why you felt good, confused, etc.
- Describe ways in which your concept of the interaction between people and the local environment has been challenged. How does the local reality differ from what you grew up with? What are some local environmental practices and beliefs that really interest you? What are the things you wish your family and friends in the United States could experience?

# ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

"Economic" refers to the interaction between environment and livelihood, and how individuals and communities work with the environment to sustain their livelihood. "Livelihood" refers to the work that people do to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves. In this section, you'll explore how livelihoods may have changed over time in response to environmental change, and how changes in the environment may have affected income levels and practices. Refer to your learning in the Biophysical section to direct the activities in this section. Focus on the use and livelihood role of natural resources and how use may have changed over time in response to various factors.



# 1 CONVERSATIONS WITH COMMUNITY MENTORS

## WHY DO THIS?

To discover which plants, animals, and other biological resources are economically vital to community well-being, and to understand the basis for their value. You'll also look at the scarcity or abundance of these resources in relation to demand.

## WHAT TO DO

Ask several individuals to rank the five to 10 most important plants and animals in the community. Encourage conversation around each choice. Learn about each particular organism by asking:

- Why is it important to the community? What is its use?
- Why is any particular plant or animal more, less, or equally important compared to another?
- Are any of the most important plants or animals difficult to obtain? Why?
- How has the availability and/or use of any particular plant or animal changed over time?
- How is the local supply of an important plant or animal maintained in relation to people's need for it?
- Note the frequency and seasonality of use (weekly, monthly, yearly) of several important plants or animals.

## ADAPTATIONS/ALTERNATIVES

- In urban areas, discuss with various families and individuals the resources they use most, those that are most difficult to obtain, and those that are most expensive.

## NOTES

# 2 MARKET SURVEY

## WHY DO THIS?

To profile the economic activity of the community and the economic significance of the surrounding natural resource base.

## WHAT TO DO

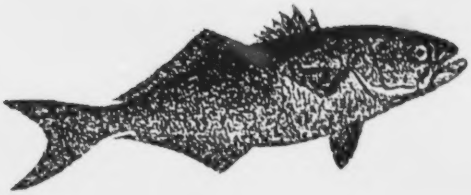
Go to a local market and use your ever-improving observation and language skills to discover what natural resources are important to various sellers and buyers, and to the overall local economy. Some potential areas of inquiry are:

- Who is in the market? Think in terms of sex, age, ethnicity, and income levels. Ask a number of people how far they have traveled to get there.
- What are people selling/buying? Note items that are manufactured, imported, and grown/made locally, non-foodstuffs, and services (e.g., tailors, health advisors).
- What natural resources products are for sale? Are they available year-round? If not, what does the merchant sell in other seasons? What is the price throughout the year?
- What imported items are, in effect, substitutes for products or services that could be made or found locally (e.g., soap, bowls, fertilizers, pesticides)?
- What are the terms of trade (e.g., how many kilograms of grain can be purchased for an equivalent value of one goat)? What items in particular can be bartered for (e.g., livestock for grain)? Is credit available? What are the interest rates and conditions of credit? Is money lending underway?

- What are the overall conditions of the market? Clean/dirty?
- Describe the various materials used to construct the market and construction methods. Does the market layout appear to be planned in any way? Why do the "onion women" sit together? Who is responsible for upkeep of the market?

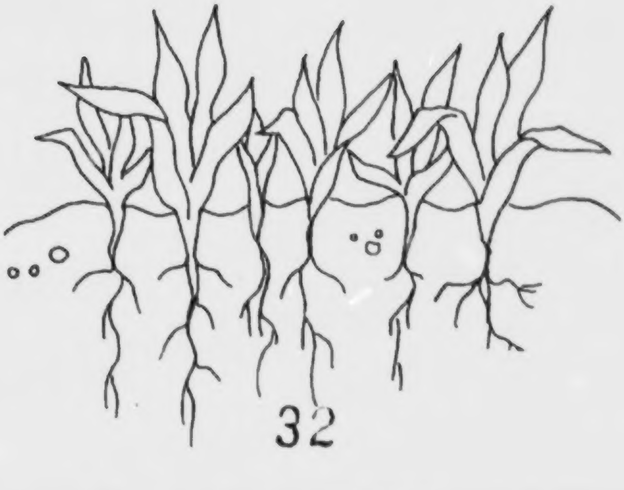
## TIPS

- This is a good activity to do with a Counterpart because of his or her familiarity with market dynamics and items for sale.
- Organize the information regarding natural resources for sale in the market in a way (like a table) that shows the name of the resource, its price, its period of availability by month, and other interesting, related information.



## ADAPTATIONS/ALTERNATIVES

- The market is an incredibly rich source of information, but can sometimes seem overwhelming, especially on your first visits. Try to identify various merchants with whom you can sit for an extended period of time and just absorb the sights, sounds, and smells of the market. Revisit these people as often as possible. Try to focus on what is happening around you, rather than on how uncomfortable you may feel. Return home and record what you've seen and felt.



## NOTES

# 3

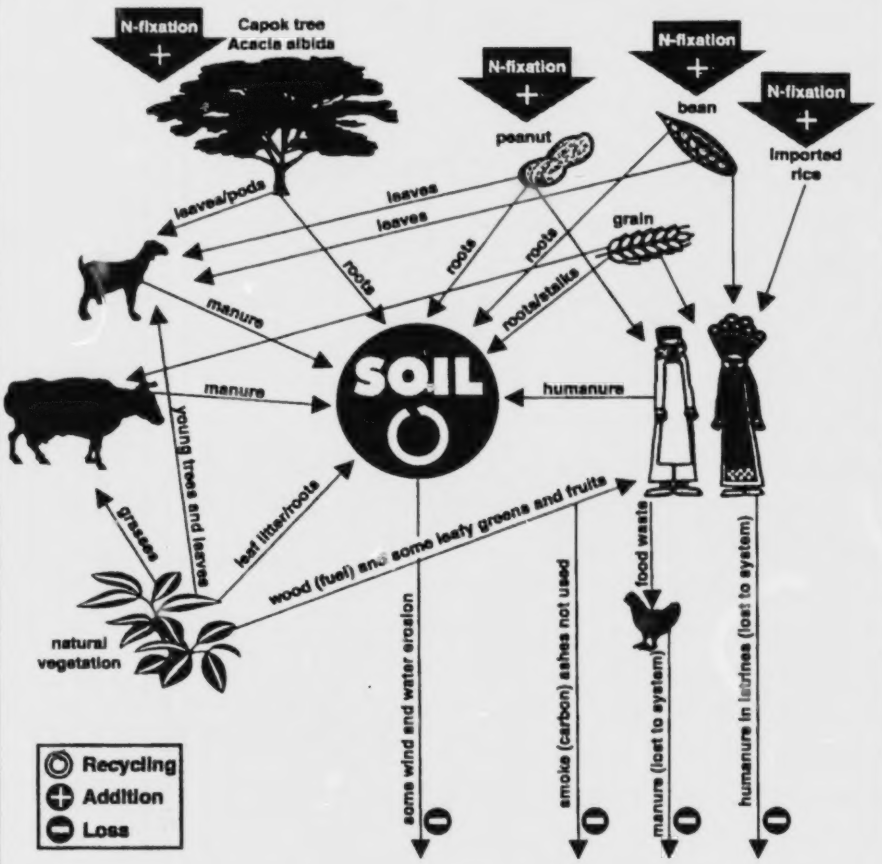
# COMMUNITY RESOURCE FLOW

## WHY DO THIS?

To determine how the nutrient resources flow throughout a community as a result of local land use practices. Nutrients are contained in every biological resource in every community, and all communities have a continuous and cyclical flow of nutrients throughout their agricultural and industrial production systems.

An interesting and fairly common example of nutrient flow has to do with the role of leguminous plants within a farming system. These are plants (clover is a typical example in the U.S. farming system) that form a symbiotic relationship with bacteria called rhizobia that live on plant roots. These bacteria are capable of turning atmospheric nitrogen into a form that is usable by plants, a process known as nitrogen fixation. You can dig up leguminous plants such as beans and peanuts when they are mature and, if the soil conditions are right, see the rhizobia nodules (knobs or bumps on the root system). If the leguminous plant is fixing nitrogen, you should be able to slit open the nodules with a knife or your finger and see a pinkish color. Your best chance of seeing this phenomenon is to look in a bean or peanut field that has received plenty of manure fertilizer.

A system that effectively utilizes nutrient cycling keeps nutrients within the system through various management techniques, such as manuring or integrating leguminous plants into the system. These techniques reduce the need for importing additional nutrients, which is costly in terms of energy units. Having an idea of nutrient gain or loss can give you an idea of the economic sustainability of various livelihood practices.


N-fixation
+
Capok tree
Acacia albida
N-fixation
+
peanut
N-fixation
+
bean
N-fixation
+
imported rice
leaves/pods
leaves
leaves
roots
roots
roots
grain
roots/stalks
manure
manure
SOIL
humanure
young trees and leaves
grasses
leaf litter/roots
wood (fuel) and some leafy greens and fruits
natural vegetation
some wind and water erosion
smoke (carbon) ashes not used
food waste
manure (lost to system)
humanure in latrines (lost to system)
◎ Recycling
⊕ Addition
⊖ Loss

## NOTES (Example)

**Sustainable Practices**

- legumes in system
- millet stalks laid on soil during dry season and incorporated at beginning of rainy season
- minimal erosion
- goats and cattle gather under A. albida and deposit manure

**Opportunities**

- chicken manure not used
- manure not incorporated into soil, results in N loss
- ashes from fire not used
- goats browse young trees
- some erosion during harmattan

## QUESTIONS

**(Examples of other questions that may result)**

- Why manure not incorporated?
- Does humanure left on surface pose health risk? What are the cultural implications of composting humanure?
- Why are ashes not used?
- Want to learn more about natural vegetation used by household?
- How much grain/legumes exported?

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## WHAT TO DO

Based on what you have discovered in previous exercises, identify the natural resources that are important to the community's livelihood systems. Design a diagram that depicts the biological areas of economic importance, e.g., agricultural fields, nurseries, forests, lowlands, riversides, grazing areas, etc. Ask various people to help you determine if you have accurately and sufficiently represented the biological resources of the livelihood system, whether natural or cultivated. Next, ask about the flow of nutrients between biological resources and depict the direction of flow. For example, cows eat grasses and leave manure in fields; crops use the nutrients from the manure; people harvest and eat or sell the grain portion of the crop; the crop residues are left in the fields or fed to livestock. Try to identify other nutrient pathways and cycles. Note where nutrients are lost to erosion, where they are exported to market, or other forms of translocation.

- Does it seem like the system has a net loss or gain of nutrients? Have you forgotten any key nutrient sources?
- Where might some nutrients be conserved for later use? For example, would composting alter the nutrient flow at all?
- Are there some common techniques that people in the community use already to recycle nutrients? Are there any innovative techniques that you have observed?
- Which practices seem "sustainable" in the sense that most nutrients and energy remain within the community system?
- How might some practices be adjusted to be more sustainable? Think about such things as fruit and vegetable production. Are people in the community consuming or selling their produce, in general? In this particular case, how could people eat more "homegrown" fruits and vegetables and receive higher prices for them at the same time?

## TIPS

- Don't worry too much about scale and the relative proportions of symbols. The goal is to understand nutrient and energy flow more so than the location of its source.
- Consider the different parts of the resource. Nutrients from a crop's grain may have a different pathway than the nutrients in the stalk. The energy and nutrients in the fruit of a tree may be transported somewhere else than those of its leaves.
- This exercise should ideally include men and women of all ages. Gender roles may cause young people to be involved in one area of resource flow and elders in a different one.

## ADAPTATIONS/ALTERNATIVES

- To better understand gender roles and relationships, you can attach symbols to the pathway to describe who is responsible for the movement of the resource. You can use the biological aspect of this exercise as background by highlighting gender roles and identifying who is responsible for the various parts of a community's livelihood system.
- If you work with schools, you may want to create a biology lesson plan that allows students to monitor and learn about nutrient flow in their communities. The students might highlight practices that encourage the maintenance of a nutrient source (like adding organic matter to soils) and those that facilitate nutrient loss (e.g., grain export, erosion).
- If determining nutrient flows in the entire community is overwhelming or not feasible, start by designing a diagram of one household or agricultural field and use that as your point of reference for larger, more expansive diagrams.
- Sketch out what you already know about nutrient flow in your community.

# 4 TIMELINE AND TRENDS

## WHY DO THIS?

To discover the history of the community and how change may have affected resource availability and management.

## WHAT TO DO

### – TIMELINE

This exercise will help you understand the background and history of the community and give you a sense of the factors contributing to its evolution. To obtain a reliable narrative, you need to initiate and nurture discussions with elderly men and women. Approach the elders with respect and begin the discussion by explaining that you would like to learn the history of the community. Here are some basic questions you might ask:

- When was the community founded and by whom?
- Who are some important historical figures and for what are they known? When did they live in the community?
- What was the livelihood system, i.e., how people grew food and earned income, when the community was founded?
- If the livelihood system has changed since the community was founded, when did it change? (For example, "Have people in this community always cultivated maize?")
- Have there been natural disasters (floods, disease, drought) that may never leave the "community consciousness"?
- How and when did the community get its name?

## Social History of One Community in West Africa

| 100-Year Time Frames | 1000 – 1400 C.E. | 1500s C.E. | 1600s C.E. | 1700s C.E. | 1800s C.E. | 1900 – 1960 C.E. | 1960 – 2000 C.E. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regional | Height of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay empires in West Africa | | Islamic social and economic influence and rule grow | Periodic Islamic movements solidify power of religious leaders<br>Serf systems put in place | Period of colonialism | | Independence from colonial powers |
| National | | | | | | | |
| Sub-Regional | Animist farmers/blacksmiths and herders coexist in relative mutual benefit using traditional social and economic sytems of production, commerce, and governance | Islam introduced to animist herders and farmers by cattle-owning immigrants from the north | | | Islamic federation established with religious leaders ruling<br>Serfdoms solidified | Invasion of colonial troops<br>Colonialists appoint administrative ruler<br>Serf systems weakened<br>Colonialists force labor; primarily wild rubber harvest | Colonials administrative structures remain in place<br>Religious leaders exercise social rule<br>Serfdom officially outlawed |
| Local | Present-day community area largely forest and grassland uninhabited by people but home to wildlife such as panthers, lions, monkeys, chimpanzees | Kalduyaabe families settle in the area of present-day community | Ranyaabe families settle in the area of present-day community | Ja'iyaabe, Balbe, Ngeriyaabe, Na'iyaabe, Seeliyaabe, Kuulunaabe, Siidiibe, and Koteebe families settle in the area | Community founded by Koteebe, Kuulunaabe, Seeliyaabe, and Siidiibe families | Colonialists install leaders to govern the community<br>Social influence of religious leaders remains strong | Various iterations of neocolonial governance established<br>System of in-kind taxation of crops established |

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## TIPS

- To date significant historical events, it may be necessary to put them in the context of events that were happening nationally or internationally at the time, e.g., World War I or II, national independence, the year the road was paved, etc.

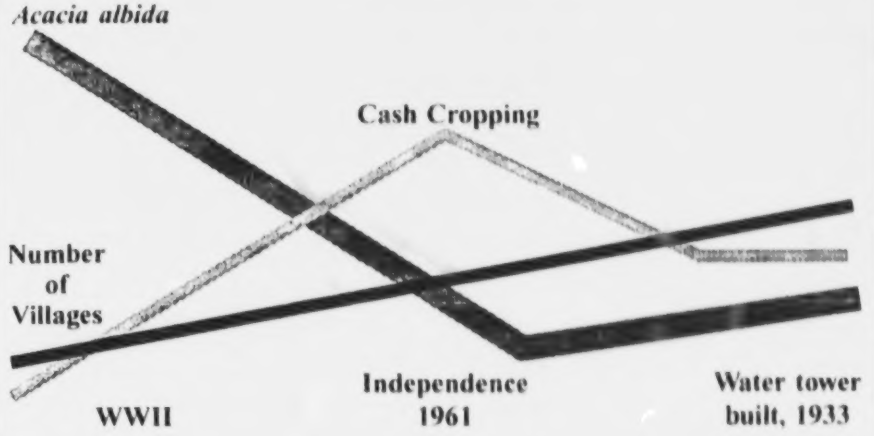
## WHAT TO DO

### – TRENDS

Using the information that you gained from the "Timeline" activity, ask your key informants how certain events may have prompted changes or adjustments in the community. Focus on such issues as changes in the landscape, the quality and quantity of available natural resources, the price and availability of goods and services, the structure of social relations in the community, and community leadership. A simple example of the type of question to ask is this: "During extended droughts, how did people change their soil management strategies?" Other questions are:

- How did resource availability change because of this event, and how has it continued to change since that time?

## TREND EXAMPLE



| 193?–194? | 1950s | 1960s | 1970s | 1980s–now |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Few villages | Cash cropping increased | Ag Research Station founded | Encourgaed to farm land | Soil fertility declining |
| Soil was more fertile | More land farmed | Scientists say that trees should only be used as windbreaks | More cash crops, less production | Farmland is scarce |
| Could have a lot of land and leave it fallow | Increase in number of villages | Brought fertilizer; at first, yields were good | Increase in number of villages | Encouraged to keep trees in system |
| Not many cash crops | | | Soil got "tired" | Still encouraged to use fertilizers |
| High yields | | | | |

### SAMPLE NOTES AND OTHER QUESTIONS:

☐ *Concentrated on* Acacia albida *because it was identified as an important tree previously.*

☐ *Later, ask about land tenure and how it changed with cash cropping. Also, ask if people see young* Acacia albida *and if it is protected. Also, I really want to find out what the spiritual significance is…if any….*

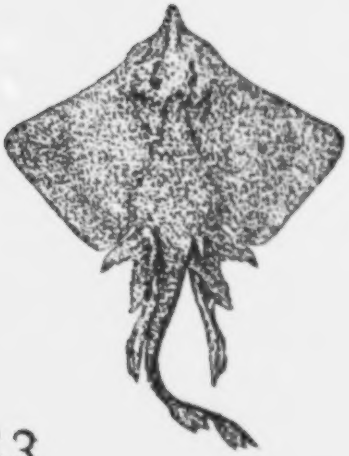
☐ *How has animal ownership changed? Do people own more animals? Or are there just more people?*

- How do "old" or traditional production practices differ from those in use today? In what ways are they the same?
- How are "new" practices appropriate or inappropriate to present environmental conditions?
- What do you think environmental or economic conditions will be like in the future for today's youth?
- How has land ownership changed over the last 30-50 years?
- How has population affected local land use practices?

## TIPS ✚

- Begin some of your initial questions of key informants with the phrase "In your view..." or "In your opinion..."
- The "Timeline" exercise focused on elders. The "Trends" exercise can include all age groups. Make sure to note who contributed to the success of each activity.
- Encourage discussion among participants, and refer back to the Timeline as a reference point. Do not expect consensus, especially where history is concerned. Make note of debates.

## NOTES



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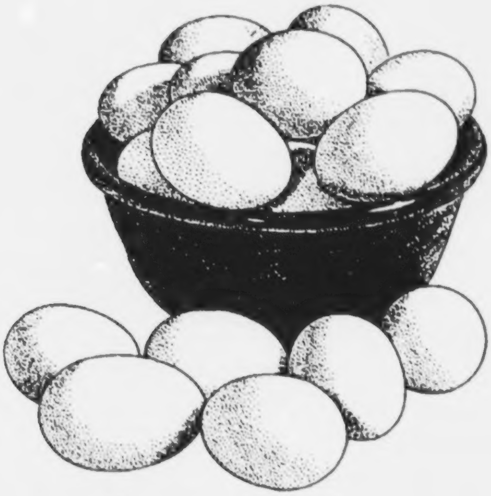
# 5 TIME TO REFLECT

## WHY REFLECT ON YOUR ACTIVITIES?

You can ask yourself the reflection questions below, and others you think of, to help clarify and direct your learning. Don't try to answer all the questions at once, but come back to them periodically to see what you've learned. Add your own questions based on your interests and learning. Try writing about some of the more complex questions. You'll surprise yourself about how much you've learned. Pick a few of the questions and try to visually represent your learning in some way. Ask community partners to help you, and think about displaying your results to other community members.

- What are the community's types of livelihood?
- What do people buy and sell, and what do they produce?
- How does illness affect economic production?
- Do you see any opportunities to enhance nutrient recycling?
- Which local land use practices promote nutrient recycling?
- Does the economic system rely on cash crops for export, or food crops for consumption? Has it always been that way?
- What are the main food crops and other cultivated plants?
- Did you learn about plants that are not cultivated (i.e., that just grow by themselves) but are economically important?
- What are the inputs and outputs of the community's primary production system over the course of a year?
- What are some adjustments people have made in traditional production practices as a result of changes in natural resource quantity and quality and/or population change?

- How have men's and women's roles changed over time? Whose roles have changed the most? Why?
- How do the biophysical characteristics of the environment relate to economic production?
- What impresses you the most about how men and women have responded to significant economic changes?
- What impresses you about the production system?



## TIPS ✚

- Review your learning so far. Note points that are unclear, conflicting, and especially interesting, where you might be mistaken, doubts, where and why you felt good, etc.
- Describe ways in which your concept of the interaction between people and the environment has been challenged. How does it differ from what you grew up with? How is it similar? What are some local environmental practices and beliefs that really interest you, and what are the things you wish your family and friends in the United States could experience with you?
- Focus on what the community has to offer, not what it lacks.

## NOTES

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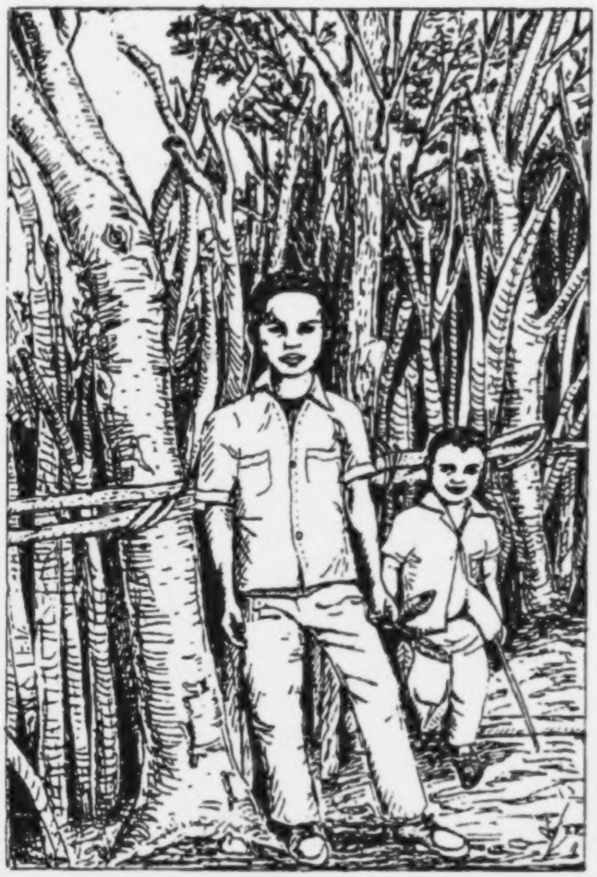
# SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

You'll probably find that this section requires greater language ability than you needed for discovering the biophysical and economic facets of your community. Additionally, you may encounter issues that are more sensitive than those related simply to biophysical and economic realms. For the activities suggested in the following pages, try to focus on environmental management techniques that seem to be culture-specific, on social relationships, and on cultural perceptions that influence land use decisions. Try to involve a range of community members.



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# 1 COMMUNITY CHANGE

## WHY DO THIS?

To learn more about the historical changes in your community.

## WHAT TO DO

You and your work partners might try to arrange semiformal interviews of two or three elders on how life in the community has changed since they were young, and how it has remained the same. Try to focus on family livelihood strategies as they are linked to the local natural resource base. Ask those interviewed to reflect on how their work differs from their parents' and grandparents' work. For example, here are several broad topics:

- Landscape Changes in the Last 30 Years
- How Farming Has Changed in Our Community
- How Changes in the Landscape Have Influenced Farming
- Farming Practices of Our Ancestors

## ADAPTATIONS/ALTERNATIVES

- Involve youth or other groups in documenting the changes that have occurred. Try to understand the perceptions regarding why change has occurred and whether it is perceived as being a good or bad thing.
- Ask people to speculate on the future.

## NOTES

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# 2 TRANSECT

## WHY DO THIS?

To discover land use zones and land management techniques that are linked directly with social factors.

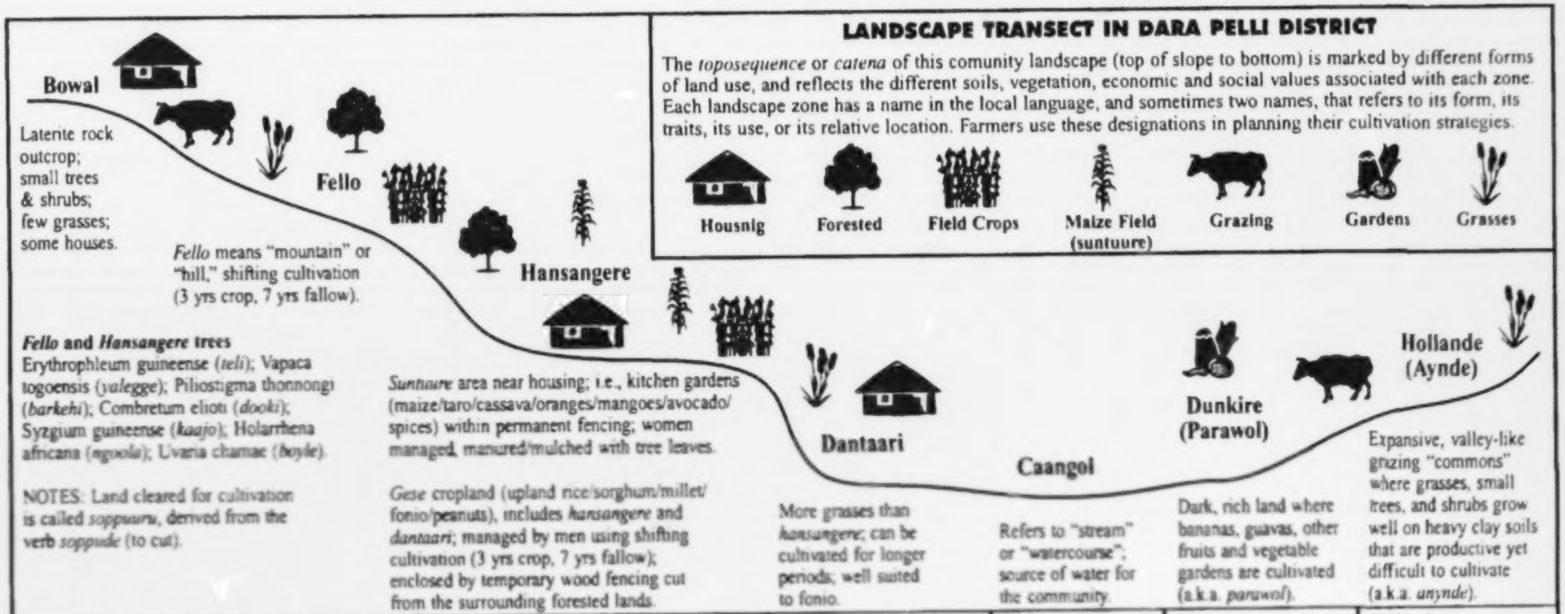
## WHAT TO DO

Use the knowledge you have gained from the biophysical and economic activities to imagine a line through the community landscape. Think of the transect as a cross-sectional view of the landscape. After you walk the line yourself, ask two or three knowledgeable community members to walk it with you a second time. At various points along the landscape line, identify land use practices, vegetation, crops, animals, water sources, etc. Describe changes in the landscape with respect to:

- Community rules, written or understood, that govern land use in the community and reasons for these rules
- Cultural management techniques like crop rotations, fallow periods, soils that are easy or difficult to cultivate, erosion control, and water management
- Recent management practice adjustments (if any) and the reason for the adjustment

# LANDSCAPE TRANSECT IN DARA PELLI DISTRICT

The *toposequence* or *catena* of this comunity landscape (top of slope to bottom) is marked by different forms of land use, and reflects the different soils, vegetation, economic and social values associated with each zone. Each landscape zone has a name in the local language, and sometimes two names, that refers to its form, its traits, its use, or its relative location. Farmers use these designations in planning their cultivation strategies.



Laterite rock outcrop; small trees & shrubs; few grasses; some houses.

*Fello* means "mountain" or "hill," shifting cultivation (3 yrs crop, 7 yrs fallow).

***Fello* and *Hansangere* trees**
Erythrophleum guineense (*teli*); Vapaca togoensis (*yalegge*); Piliostigma thonnongi (*barkehi*); Combretum elioti (*dooki*); Syzgium guineense (*kaajo*); Holarrhena africana (*ngoola*); Uvaria chamae (*boyle*).

NOTES: Land cleared for cultivation is called *soppuuru*, derived from the verb *soppude* (to cut).

*Suntuure* area near housing; i.e., kitchen gardens (maize/taro/cassava/oranges/mangoes/avocado/spices) within permanent fencing; women managed, manured/mulched with tree leaves.

*Gese* cropland (upland rice/sorghum/millet/fonio/peanuts), includes *hansangere* and *dantaari*; managed by men using shifting cultivation (3 yrs crop, 7 yrs fallow); enclosed by temporary wood fencing cut from the surrounding forested lands.

More grasses than *hansangere*; can be cultivated for longer periods; well suited to fonio.

Refers to "stream" or "watercourse"; source of water for the community.

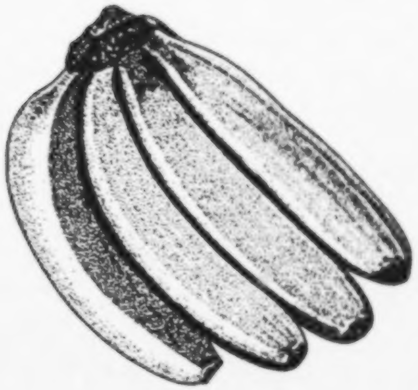
Dark, rich land where bananas, guavas, other fruits and vegetable gardens are cultivated (a.k.a. *parawol*).

Expansive, valley-like grazing "commons" where grasses, small trees, and shrubs grow well on heavy clay soils that are productive yet difficult to cultivate (a.k.a. *anynde*).

| | Bowal | Fello | Hansangere | Dantaari | Caangol | Dunkire | Hollande |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **LAND USE** | No farming; some grazing. | Millet fields in short rotation; forest/fallow. | Most widely used grain fields, usually in a 2-3 cropping cycle followed by at least 7 years of fallow; cleared and burned for cropping; some grazing during fallows. | Split between growing fonio/grazing livestock; much is "bushland"; can cultivate with machinery. | Drinking, bathing; laundry water source for people and livestock. | Extensive fruit and vegetable plots in dry season; can flood in rainy season. | Pasture par excellence some woodlot planting; some efforts to grow soybeans mechanically. |
| **SOILS** | Very shallow; rocks/laterite, low fertility. | Rocky, fairly easy to work; low fertility. | Gravelly, shallow, low fertility yet can support millet, sorghum, peanuts, upland rice, fonio; erosion surprisingly limited. | Sandy, more clay versus hansangere; less rocky; very hard when dry. | —— | Very fertile, alluvial loam easy to work, few stones/gravel. | Very fertile, heavy clay is difficult to cultivate; slick/muddy when wet. |
| **VEGETATION** | Sparse; scrub trees/bushes; short grasses. | Mixed small & large trees; short grasses. | Wide range of trees, bushes, and grasses; forest areas bordering uphill streams not cultivated; some "sacred" areas not cut. | Fewer large trees, more grass than hansangere; shrubby, smaller trees. | —— | Cleared, planted to fruit except next to streams; quackgrass. | Primarily short and tall grasses; medium spiny trees; savanna-like. |
| **ECONOMIC VALUE** | Very limited; some grazing. | Limited to millet crops. | Most grains grown here consumed (little marketed except peanuts); mulch source (tree leaves) for suntuure maize crop; firewood and livestock forage. | Productive for maize with mechanical/fertilizer, good for livestock forage (cows, sheep, goats). | Hand irrigation for vegetable and fruit gardens; water for livestock; few fish. | Valuable fruit and vegetable growing area; some "wells" for people & livestock. | Valuable pasture land, open range used by semi-nomadic herders. |
| **SOCIAL VALUE** | Ex-nobility families live near this zone. | Ex-nobility families live in this zone. | Pivotal areas for defining land tenure; access, use, and tenure claims by former serfs tenuous and nebulous. | Closer to settlements of former serfs; closer to main transport routes. | Gathering point for women; cleansing point for everyone. | Tenure claimed by ex-nobles, yet close to ex-serf settlements. | Tenure rather nebulous; community-governed. |
| **NOTES** | Rainfall tends to run off. | Monkey habitat. | Also the land where houses and woemn's maize fields (pl: *cuntuuji*) established. | Fairly unexploited, ex-serf tenure less tenuous. | Many streams dry up for part of year. | Significant potential for economic returns. | Can extend for vast distances; beautiful. |

## TIPS

- It may be appropriate to do more than one transect in large communities and to do them with different age, sex, and ethnic groups to ensure a full representation of perceptions and opinions.
- Be aware that a full day (or several half-days) may be needed to do this exercise.
- Note species composition and whether there are patterns regarding plant species composition and other variables, such as proximity to village, soil type, slope, etc.



## NOTES

# 3

# TRADITIONAL TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

## WHY DO THIS?

To learn about the range of local technical knowledge, especially traditional knowledge, and with whom it resides.

## WHAT TO DO

With your work partners, find and interview community experts, people thought of as innovators or experimenters, and people considered to be especially proficient in some aspect of the livelihoods that support the community. Discussion topics might include:

- Seed saving and selection
- Soil management
- Livestock keeping
- Hunting and gathering
- Healing and illness prevention

Try to learn from other community members why these people are considered experts, and then interview the experts themselves. Put questions in the context of the profession. For example, interviewers might ask an expert farmer:

- How would you characterize a good farmer? Why are some farmers more successful than others?
- What characteristics should good cropland have, and how do you maintain those qualities?
- What and how have you learned from others about farming?

- What do you value the most about the life of farming?
- Why do you farm rather than doing another profession?
- Does religion have a role in farming? If so, what is it?

## TIPS

- Make sure that community experts include women and men.
- Think about the traditional modes of communication and how information is conveyed. Are there people in the community known for their extraordinary speaking ability, particularly in the local language? Try to involve these community members in conveying what you have learned using the oral traditions of the local culture.
- Visually represent your findings about traditional technical knowledge through painting, drawing, sculpture, or other mediums. Ask community members to comment on your work.
- It is important to understand that many traditional communities have practices and perceptions that have a spiritual basis. These beliefs can be very significant with regard to how a community, or an individual within the community, views the process and products of development.

## NOTES

# 4 VISION STATEMENTS

## WHY DO THIS?

To learn what people value in their communities and their ideas for future development.

## WHAT TO DO

Collect a series of vision statements from people with whom you have established a relationship. These are statements from people in the community about future possibilities and direction for community development. Use what you have learned from previous activities to create relevant questions. Some ideas for questions are:

- Describe what your community would look like, and how people would work with each other, if you had the power to make two or three significant changes.
- What are the strengths of your community? How can these strengths be used to make the community an even better place than it is today in which to live and raise a family?
- How would you want your responsibilities to the community and to your family to change, if they could change?
- What would you do if you had more time in a normal day?

## TIPS

- Ask questions that allow respondents to answer in terms of what already exists within the community, at least in part.
- Create questions that elicit real possibilities in the community, rather than fantasies.

- Ask questions that reflect what you have learned about your community but, at the same time, challenge your learning.

## NOTES

# 5

# TIME TO REFLECT

## WHY REFLECT ON YOUR ACTIVITIES?

These are questions you can ask yourself to help clarify and direct your learning. Ask community partners to help you answer some of the questions.

### GENDER

- What natural resources do men manage and what do women manage? Who controls which natural resources? Can you make a list of these? Who has access to which resources?
- Who are the experts in your community? Why are they considered experts? In what areas are women and men experts when it comes to natural resource management?

### RELIGION

- Do people refer to theological and/or supernatural forces in their observations about the environment and natural resource management? In what ways do they make such references? How might you use or address these perceptions when thinking about possible development work?

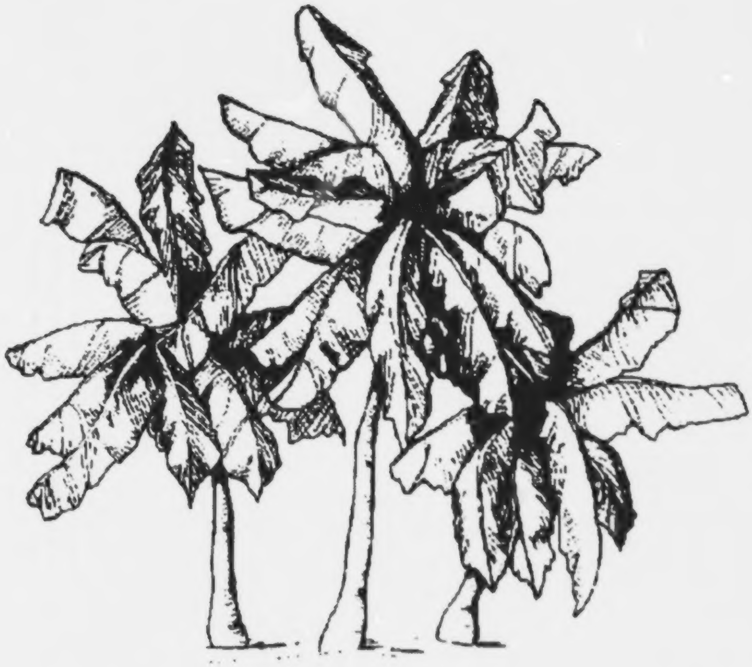
### SOCIETY

- What social themes have emerged that seem to affect the way people engage in their livelihoods? For example, do people articulate a need for community solidarity in natural resource management? Do they refer to their parents' and grandparents' decisions about land use management?

- Do you see discrepancies between what the culture says about treatment of the environment and what is practiced? How can you explain this? Is it hypocrisy or something else?

## TECHNOLOGY

- Have you identified farmers who appear to use *regenerative* agricultural techniques, i.e. farming methods that improve the land resource while it is used to grow food? What practices in particular might be considered *regenerative*? Why do you think these farmers use these practices while others do not? Describe these farmers and their techniques.
- Can you identify any agricultural practices that have the net effect of maintaining or promoting biodiversity or, on the contrary, any that endanger biodiversity?



## EDUCATION

- Did you find any natural resource conservation practices that could be useful in an environmental education curriculum?
- Have you met community members who you think may become effective environmental educators?

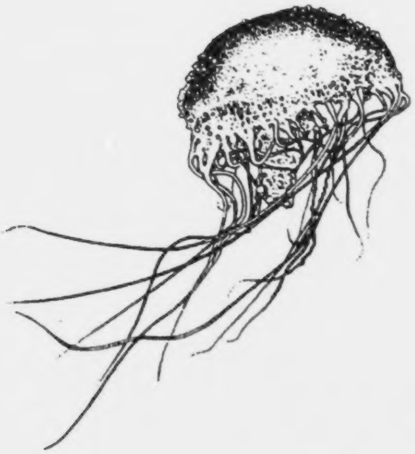
## DEVELOPMENT

- When thinking about development strategies in your community, what biophysical, economic, and social factors (specific to your community) really need to be addressed?
- What options do you see for development that fit within your project framework? How are these options appropriate to the way your community works, and to your community's natural resource assets? In what ways might those options not be a good "fit" with your community's way of operating?
- In terms of your work as a Volunteer, given what you have learned so far, what is your next step? How can you build on what you have learned about the local environment?

## TIPS

- Review your learning once again. Note points that are unclear, conflicting, and especially interesting, where you might be mistaken, doubts, where and why you felt good, etc.
- Describe ways in which your initial concepts of people's interactions with their environment have been challenged.

## NOTES



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# APPENDIX A – ACTIVITIES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

## COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL SOURCEBOOK

This project can be initiated with various community members and groups. The idea of an environmental sourcebook is to document community knowledge in visual and creative ways and make it accessible to community members to ponder and discuss. Suggestions for potential groups to involve include students of all ages, youth organizations, women's groups, farmers' associations, religious organizations, and other community-based organizations. A Community Environmental Sourcebook does not necessarily need to be in a classic book format, although that is an option. In conjunction with the community group, think of creative ways to display the information and to represent people in the community.

## LOCAL PLANT PRESS

The basic materials needed for constructing a plant press are:

- Newspaper
- Several pieces of corrugated cardboard (30 centimeters by 45 centimeters is a standard size)
- Straps or cords
- Plywood or lattice made of wooden laths (cut to 30 centimeters by 45 centimeters)

Leaf samples should be put in the press within a few hours of their collection. Place the sample between several sheets of newspaper. Sandwich the sample between two cardboard separators. Place another sample on the flip side of one of the separators and repeat the process until you have prepared all the samples you have gathered for the day. Samples with thicker stems or small fruits can be accommodated by inserting pieces of foam rubber between the newspaper and cardboard separator. Bind the press together with the straps. Check samples daily and change any damp newspaper. Remove them when they are dry. In particularly humid conditions, dry the samples where dry heat is available, e.g., well above or beside (not too close!) a cooking fire. Stiff white paper works best for mounting. Plants can be mounted using sticky tape or rubber cement. Affix a label that includes information on the name(s) of the plant, date of collection, traits used by local people to identify the plant, and the plant's habitat. Include other interesting characteristics and uses.

## HANDWRITTEN READING BOOKS

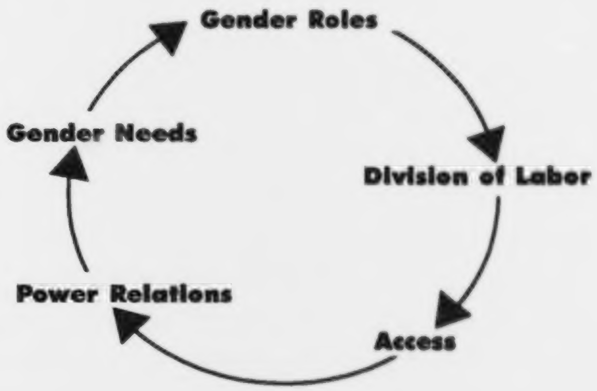
Environmental topics that reflect community interests can be a great addition to literacy projects for primary school students or other similar educational uses. If there is a secondary school in the area, students can write and illustrate the books and pass them on to others who are learning to read. This is a great way to involve the whole community in the education process.

## SEED FAIRS

Seed fairs can help create an awareness of the rich biological diversity that exists among community farming systems. Farmers can learn from one another about the various characteristics of seed varieties and explore how the different varieties maintain and increase the resilience of local farming systems through genetic diversity. For more information, contact your associate Peace Corps director or write to the Centre for Research and Information on Low-External Input and Sustainable Agriculture (www.oneworld.org/ileia), PO Box 64, 3830 AB Leusden, The Netherlands, or e-mail ileia@ileia.nl.

# APPENDIX B – GENDER ANALYSIS

Adapted from Parker, A. R., I. Lozano, and L. Messner, *Gender Relations Analysis: A Guide for Trainers*. Westport, Conn.: Save the Children, 1995. (ICE# WD138)



**Gender roles** are what society views as appropriate behavior based on sex, age, or class. What are the responsibilities of men, women, boys, girls, household, and community? Gender roles determine the *division of labor*. Put more simply, who does what? Gender roles and division of labor determine who has how much *access* to which resources, facilities, opportunities, organizations, information, benefits, etc. In turn, gender roles, division of labor, and access cumulatively determine *power relations*. In other words, who in the household or community decides if, when, and how activities should or will happen?

Gender needs are derived from gender roles, division of labor, access, and power relations. Project activities that are gender-sensitive contribute to an improved capacity by individuals to fulfill their gender roles. Offering complete and timely market information to small-scale women onion growers may make it easier for the women to sell their onions at greater profit. A

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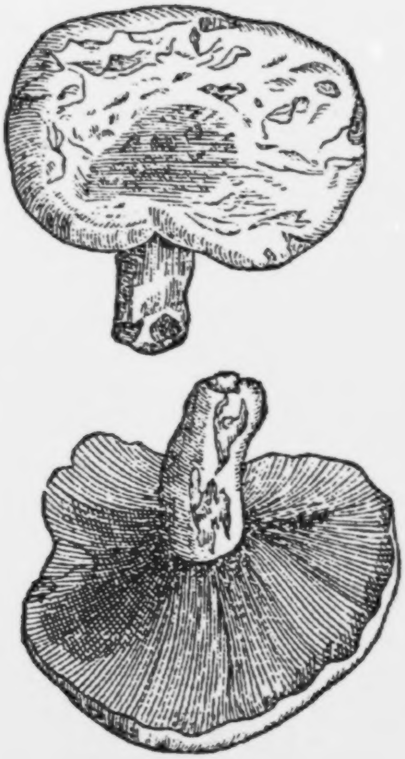
similar scenario would be true if men who trade livestock had better market information. Some gender-sensitive activities may alter gender roles. Training women to operate a seed bank may create competition in the setting of wholesale grain prices, and introduce women into this male-dominated field of commerce.



# APPENDIX C –
# ADDITIONAL READING

You can order the following publications from ICE. Include the publication number and quantity desired in your order.

1. ***Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets.*** John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight. (ACTA Publications) 1993. 376 pp. [ICE Publication No. CD051]

   Guide to asset-based community development, summarizing lessons learned by studying successful community-building initiatives in hundreds of U.S. neighborhoods. Outlines what local communities can do to start their own asset-based development, including how to rediscover their local assets; how to combine and mobilize these strengths; and how "outsiders" in government can effectively contribute to the process of asset-based development.

2. ***Culture Matters: The Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Workbook.*** Craig Storti and Laurette Bennhold-Samaan. (Peace Corps ICE) 1997. 256 pp. [ICE Publication No. T0087]

   Practical, interactive workbook for PCVs in all programs. Guides the reader through the cross-cultural experience and through the major concepts in the intercultural field, and presents exercises, stories, quotations, and descriptive text designed to aid the Volunteer in successfully adapting to the new culture.

3. ***Gender and Development Training; Girls' Education.*** (Peace Corps ICE) 1998. Various pages. [ICE Publication No. M0054]

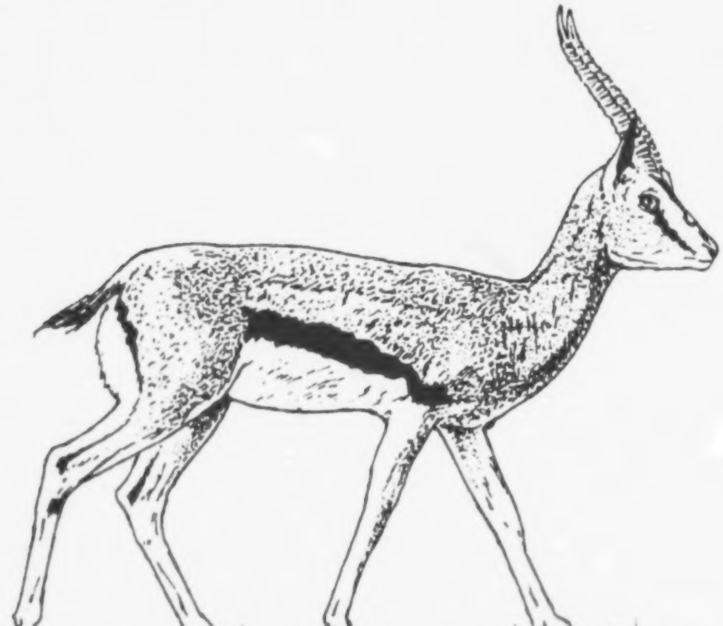
   A product of the Gender and Development Training Initiative, which seeks to institutionalize the consideration of gender issues throughout the Peace Corps. Contains eight booklets on gender and development, which provide background and development of projects, training designs for various participants, session plans and handouts, and insights from the field. Four additional booklets address girls' education.

4. ***PACA: Participatory Analysis for Community Action.*** (Peace Corps ICE) 1996. 350 pp. [ICE Publication No. M0053]

   *Participatory Analysis for Community Action (PACA)* is an approach used to facilitate communities' exploration of their own realities in order to take action for changes they desire. Based on earlier participatory analysis methods, such as Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory Rural Appraisal, PACA turns the appraisal activity into a process where the development agent and the community develop a partnership that leads to community control of its own projects. As a defining criterion, PACA distinguishes the role of gender in development by applying the participatory exercises with separate groups of women and men, girls and boys, which allows the community members to compare and analyze together the roles that shape their reality. In similar ways, PACA can be used to understand age, ethnicity, or any other source of societal differentiation that has implications for development. The tools can be used in schools, organizations, institutions, and any other group, rural or urban, where different voices need to be heard.

**5.** ***Power, Process and Participation: Tools for Change.*** Rachel Slocum and Lori Wichart, editors. (IT Publications, Ltd.) 1995. 251 pp. [ICE Publication No. WD123]. **Distribution to Peace Corps in-country resource centers only.**

Intended to provide participatory tools that will give voice to those excluded from decision-making processes and control of critical resources. Includes ways of encouraging the less powerful to translate their experiences and interests into action. Discusses power relationships within a community and between local institutions and outsiders. Pays close attention to gender issues.



**6.** ***Recording and Using Indigenous Knowledge: A Manual.*** (IIRR Publications) 1996. 211 pp. [ICE Publication No. CD054]

Provides the information and tools to integrate indigenous knowledge into development work. Describes more than 30 methods for recording and assessing indigenous knowledge and 11 mini-case studies that show how projects can build on indigenous knowledge. Focuses on many aspects of indigenous knowledge, including agriculture, livestock rearing, food preparation, and natural resource management.

**7.** ***Tools for the Field: Methodologies Handbook for Gender Analysis in Agriculture.*** Hilary Sims Feldstein and Janice Jiggins, editors. (Kumarian Press) 1994. 270 pp. [ICE Publication No. WD114]

A collection of field examples of gender-related research focusing on agricultural projects. Provides concrete examples of important ways gender considerations can be taken into account in project design, implementation, and evaluation.

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# LEARNING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE

Information Collection and Exchange
Publication No. T0126

# LEARNING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE

# TRAINING MANUAL

**PEACE CORPS**
**SEPTEMBER 2002**

INFORMATION COLLECTION
AND EXCHANGE
ICE #T0126

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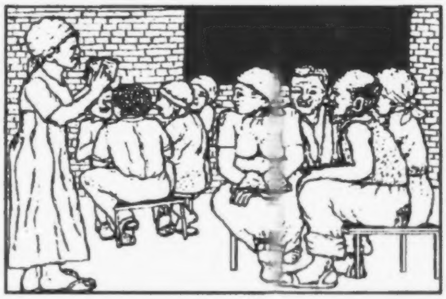
# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* was produced in recognition of the cross-cultural challenges faced by Volunteers during their first three months of service. Volunteers and associate Peace Corps directors identified the need for self-directed learning activities to assist and accelerate the process of community entry. This training manual responds to that need. It is intended for use by training managers and technical training coordinators.

The Peace Corps profoundly appreciates the reviews of this publication and the suggestions made by hundreds of Peace Corps staff and Volunteers worldwide during a two-year design and development phase. Nearly 100 draft copies of this training manual were requested by field staff in Africa, Central and South America, the Caribbean, the Pacific, Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Mediterranean for use and testing in Pre-Service Training. The positive feedback to the draft documents during that period provided the inspiration to publish and disseminate this manual.

# VOLUNTEER LEARNING AND COMMUNITY ENTRY

## INTRODUCTION

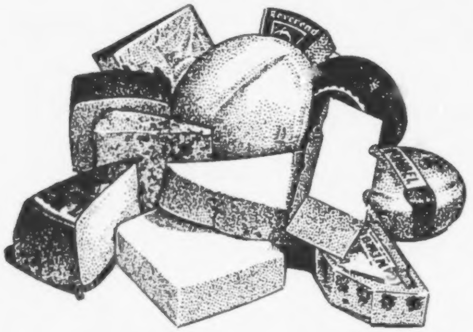


Newly posted Peace Corps Volunteers are usually advised to focus on learning local language and culture during their first several months of service, in addition to working themselves into their assigned jobs. One of their initial goals is to adjust to their new surroundings and become familiar with community life. This is known as "community entry." Yet many Volunteers remain unsure of what to do in their first months in their community. Some may even feel excessively pressured to identify areas for development activity as quickly as possible. Because Volunteers should focus first on learning about their communities, the Peace Corps has published *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge: A Volunteer's Guide to Community Entry*. The guide facilitates the community entry process by providing Volunteers with ideas and activities for discovering practices, perceptions, beliefs, values, people, and other local resources with which development actions can be built. The guide encourages Volunteers to be observant, creative, and reflective in adapting to their individual circumstances and interests. This helps ensure that the process of becoming comfortable and functional in their communities is enlightening *and* enjoyable. As a complement to *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*, this training manual suggests ways to introduce the guide to community entry to prospective Volunteers while they are still in Pre-Service Training (PST).

Effective use of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* by Volunteers once they reach their site requires that trainees clearly understand strategic ways to learn about their community as a requisite initial step in development action. This learning process can and should begin in PST. *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* lends itself well to integration into most PST frameworks. It is not intended as an add-on training activity. Each activity in the guide is designed to build the lingual, technical, and cultural knowledge of Volunteers in training. Training managers, technical training coordinators, and associate Peace Corps directors alike should find that they are able to use *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* in language classes (by formulating and practicing questions in local and national languages), in technical training sessions (by learning about community livelihood strategies and local technical knowledge and practices), and in cross-cultural sessions (by reflecting on how culture shapes decision making and livelihood practices). These PST applications are further discussed in subsequent sections of this manual.

The following general schedule is recommended for introducing *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* to trainees during PST:

| **Session** | **Timing of Session in PST** | **Session Length** |
|---|---|---|
| Local Environmental Knowledge Warm-up | Week 3 | 2 hours |
| Doing an Activity: Biophysical | Week 4 | 2 hours for the activity<br>2 hours for reflection |
| Doing an Activity: Economic | Week 5 | 2 hours for the activity<br>2 hours for reflection |
| *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*: The Project Framework | Sometime during the last two weeks of PST | 2 hours |



## LEARNING THROUGH DISCOVERY AND RECOGNITION

*Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* advocates a training strategy that helps Volunteers appreciate the value of host-community practices, perceptions, beliefs, values, and knowledge. Why this training strategy? Because, first and foremost, the role of the Volunteer in development is capacity building. Every community in the world possesses the basic building blocks for capacity building. They are people, and the resources people use to gain their livelihood. That is not to say that communities already have everything they need for development, merely that the fundamental ingredients are in place. For Volunteers to appreciate the social, economic, and biophysical wealth of communities with which local capacity can be built, they should seek to "discover and recognize" local assets before they try to "categorize and assess" them. There are basic differences between these two approaches to learning about local environmental resources:

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## TWO APPROACHES TO LEARNING ABOUT LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

| **Discovery and Recognition** | **Categorization and Assessment** |
|---|---|
| • A primary goal is improved communication between cultural "insiders" and "outsiders." | • A primary goal is initiation of development actions successful in other cultural contexts. |
| • Guides the formulation of hypotheses that accept the rationality of current behaviors. | • Applies predetermined standards to judge which values and knowledge are relevant. |
| • Suggests that "new" information needs an accommodation in traditional knowledge. | • Generally limits learning about the local environment to biophysical information. |
| • Learners are encouraged to highlight useful resources already available in the community. | • Learners tend to focus on what communities lack in resources rather than on what they have. |

Neither of these approaches to learning about community assets is necessarily better than the other. They are qualitatively different yet complementary. To practice one without the other, however, could influence the efficiency and effectiveness of development action. These are really important issues for Volunteers who have but two years of service in which to "get something done." Much of that time is spent learning languages and adapting to new cultural contexts. Volunteers therefore need an approach to community entry that encourages them to continue their technical learning in a self-directed way after being sworn in. We would like Volunteers to learn about all facets—biophysical, economic, social—of their host-community's technical world. For this reason we encourage Volunteers to use a *discovery and recognition* approach to learning about local environmental resources in addition to *categorization and assessment.*

As Volunteers learn about their community's human and natural resources, they will become increasingly valuable assets to the community. This is because they will be better able to understand and communicate about the resources that community members value and use for their livelihood. Efficient and effective development action best occurs when no community assets are neglected, including those assets that Volunteers bring to their community from their own experiences and education. Indeed, the goal of teaching trainees to use *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* is that they will recognize and discover that community and Volunteer assets alike are invaluable tools and equal partners in service for development!

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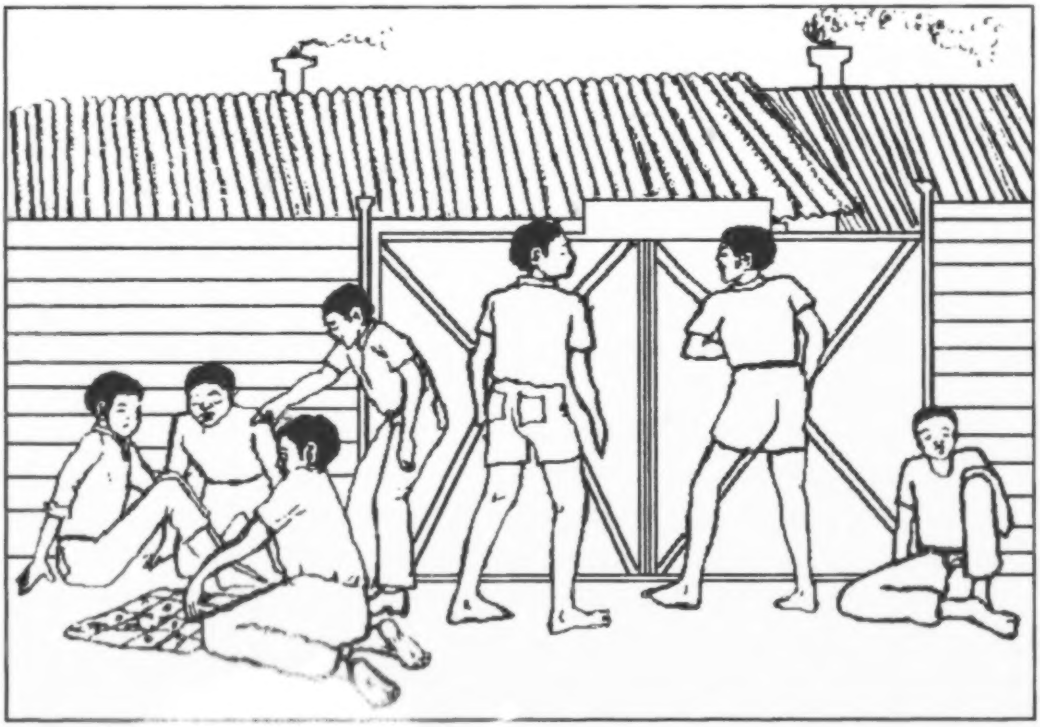
# LEARNING ABOUT CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

*Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* provides Volunteers with a self-directed method for learning about the cultural basis of livelihood in their communities. How is this possible? Practically every community in the world, including those where Volunteers live and work, creates and nurtures cultural systems that respond to and reflect the biophysical, economic, and social environment in which its people live and work. Because so many communities where Volunteers work rely on the local natural resource base for their livelihoods, trainees and Volunteers can use the environment as a starting point for learning about their community's culture. In exploring how people relate to the biophysical, social, and economic elements of their communities via the activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*, trainees and Volunteers will have many chances to see, hear, touch, feel, and talk about the key facets of a community's culture. It is important for trainees to realize that through learning about farming practices, the use of water, market goods, sources of income, gender roles, and household decision making, they are also learning about cultural earmarks of an organized society. They are learning what colors the unique worldviews that define particular cultures.

There is also the role of language in culture and development to consider. Put simply, Volunteers must communicate well to be effective in their work. Volunteers' mastery of greetings and building a functional vocabulary in the local language are absolutely important. The most effective communication, however, relies on Volunteers' ability to understand and articulate the cultural realities unique to the communities where they live and work. The words that people select and put together to describe and make sense of their world are verbal mirrors of their culture. Volunteers cannot fully recognize local cultural realities, much less compare them to their own in a meaningful way, until they understand the words and phrases that their neighbors and colleagues use from day to day. We can think of language as a special ingredient that helps outsiders digest their cross-cultural experiences. During their first several months in a community, Volunteers will consume more than their share of cross-cultural experiences. They may even feel "culturally stuffed" at times, and not always comfortable. As their language skills improve, however, Volunteers will be better able to separate nouns from verbs, to discern the taste of jokes, to recognize what people think is important versus what is *really* important. Thanks above all to language skills, new Volunteers will be better able to savor local culture.

With these principles in mind, the activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* provide new Volunteers with guidelines and ideas on ways to discover and practice their language skills. The activities are divided into sections that build on each other as Volunteers move through the guide. Biophysical activities, presented first in the guide, are largely concerned with increasing Volunteers' awareness of local geography, ecology, and various other environmental characteristics. At this stage, the process of asking questions and engaging in activities is more important than understanding the answers. Economic activities, presented second in the guide, require Volunteers to have improved their language skills. These activities focus on how community members depend on the environment to sustain their livelihood. Social activities require greater language ability than those in the previous two sections. These activities deal with issues that might be more culturally sensitive and complex, such as social relationships and spiritual beliefs as they relate to the local environment. One might suggest that the social activities are better suited for Volunteers with improved language skills and, for this reason, should more appropriately follow implementation of the biophysical and economic activities.



# USE OF *LEARNING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE* IN TRAINING

## LANGUAGE AND CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING

It is very important to involve language and cross-cultural trainers in introducing *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* to trainees. Six of the 12 hours needed in Pre-Service Training to teach trainees how to use the community entry guide directly involve practicing language skills. At least four of the 12 hours integrate cultural issues. Rather than adding these sessions to the PST design, language and cross-cultural trainers may find that the activities fit well into the existing training schedule while satisfying the training objectives. Trainees will find it beneficial to review or practice the activities with language and cross-cultural trainers. The roles of language and cross-cultural trainers is discussed further in the section on session designs.

## TECHNICAL TRAINING: PST AND IST

*Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* can be used as a reference for technical training in Pre-Service Training, particularly for environment/agriculture projects. All 12 hours of PST sessions described here can be applied to technical training and integrated with language and cross-cultural training. The guide focuses on a method for Volunteers to learn about the local biophysical, economic, and social milieu during their first few months in their community. A PST using this approach would focus on preparing trainees for community entry by strengthening their self-directed learning skills. As part of their technical training, trainees would refer to the guide to practice methods for determining what they and their work partners need to learn in order to implement specific development actions.

An In-Service Training (IST) after Volunteers spend three or four months at their sites would focus on one or two objectives: 1) application of what Volunteers and their work partners learn during the Volunteers' first several months at their sites to conceptualize development actions that build on community realities and assets; and 2) strengthening the capabilities of Volunteers and their work partners in specific technical areas—for example, small enterprise management, development of environmental education materials, and marketing of horticultural products.

## COMMUNITY-BASED TRAINING

Because *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* activities use communities as centers for learning, training managers and facilitators may find that the guide is a useful tool for enriching the content of community-based training (CBT). One advantage is that *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* integrates language, technical, and cultural issues.

# PRE-SERVICE TRAINING SESSION DESIGNS

## 1

## PST SESSION 1: LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE WARM-UP

### OVERVIEW

In this session, trainees will practice listening to farmers share their knowledge of local practices related to farming and land use management. Three points underlie the purpose of this session:

- Trainees need to understand how farmers explain natural resource management concepts.
- Trainees need to recognize that farmers have valuable knowledge that they use in their work.
- The way farmers use language to explain their work reflects their cultural values.

### OBJECTIVES

1. Trainees will be able to phrase and ask questions that elicit the specific knowledge and unique perceptions that farmers have of their environment and natural resource management.
2. Trainees will be able to cite and explain the concepts about the environment and natural resource management that farmers have using specific local terminology. (For example, farmers may describe the concept of "soil fertility" in a manner that is reflective of local practices and perceptions, rather than in a manner that is familiar to trainees.)

### TIME REQUIRED

Two hours for the activity. Two hours for reflection.

### PARTICIPANTS

- Trainees
- 5-15 local farmers (English fluency is not required)
- 1-3 language trainers or cross-cultural trainers for facilitation
- Technical trainer/APCD to observe the process

## TRAINER/TRAINEE PREPARATION

Trainers should locate five to 15 farmers (men and women) willing to share their knowledge and expertise with trainees. Explain to the farmers that you, the technical trainer/APCD, would like the trainees to learn what farmers know about farming. It is important for the farmers to understand that, in effect, they will teach the trainees what they know, and that the trainees are to learn. Depending on your circumstances, you can invite the farmers to the training site or take trainees to the communities where the farmers live. The farmers will likely feel more comfortable in familiar surroundings and thus be more likely to talk about their work.

In conjunction with language trainers, trainees should prepare three open-ended questions in the language of their training locality that concern farmers' work and the surrounding environment. It is best if the trainees have discussed these issues in PST already, directly or indirectly. Here are some examples of the questions trainees might ask the farmers (in local languages):

- What does soil fertility mean to you? (the technical concept to discover here is *soil fertility*)
- How do you distinguish a good soil from a bad soil? (technical concept is *soil fertility*)
- What do you do to maintain soil fertility? (technical concept is *soil fertility*)
- What are the names for different soils? (technical concept is *soil classification*)
- Which soils are the best for—(maize, rice, millet, etc.)? (technical concept is *agronomy*)
- Why do farmers plant different crops in the same fields? (*seed selection, agronomy*)
- Why do farmers use different seed varieties of the same crop? (*seed selection, biodiversity*)
- How do you select the seeds you want to save? (*seed selection, agronomy, biodiversity*)

Notice that many of these questions are clearly asking for the farmers' viewpoints. Learning to say such phrases as "*What does __(technical term)__ mean to you?*" or "*In your opinion…*" or "*What do you think about…?*" are useful to ensure that respondents offer their perspectives.

Working with their language and cross-cultural trainers, trainees should prepare for this exercise by formulating their questions precisely in the local language, even if it is not the language they will use at their community work site. Language trainers should be prepared to repeat the questions during the exercise using the exact words used by the trainees, in case the farmers do not understand what the trainees have asked. If during the course of the interviews it becomes necessary to reformulate a question, trainers should be prepared to repeat the question several times so that trainees can note the verbiage for

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later analysis. Language and cross-cultural trainers should also be prepared to translate farmers' responses verbatim (i.e., without on-the-spot reinterpretation) into English for the trainees. Finally, language trainers should be prepared to translate (as best as possible) any follow-up questions trainees might think of for the farmers, and to translate verbatim the responses of the farmers to the follow-up questions as well.

## ACTIVITY PROCEDURE

1. Prior to the interview sessions, trainees and trainers need to think about managing the interview. An ideal scenario might be five farmers with five trainees and one facilitator. If there are 15 trainees in the PST, for example, you might think about splitting into two or three interview groups. Even an interview group of three farmers with seven to nine trainees and one trainer is not bad. In any of these cases, trainees need to coordinate among one another which questions will be asked in what order. All in all, the interview session should consist of no more than 15 questions with the option of one follow-up inquiry (no more) per question.

2. Language or cross-cultural trainers, as facilitators, should begin the interview session by explaining again to the farmers that the trainees are there to learn (see above). They need to emphasize that the trainees are not looking for right or wrong answers, but rather the farmers' opinions and ideas. The facilitators should also ask the farmers' permission for the trainees to take notes during the interview because they will not otherwise be able to recall everything the farmers tell them about their farming knowledge.

3. Trainees should ask the farmers their questions (no translations) and listen to the farmers' responses via the language or cross-cultural trainers' translations. As the activity proceeds, trainees should note the ideas and practices that they find most interesting, and try to think of one follow-up question. They can also note the interview ambience, the farmers' expressions and mannerisms (e.g., whether or not they appear comfortable), and other non-question items.

4. Trainees should understand that the activity's purpose is to practice asking questions and listening to responses. Trainees will be in a learning mode, and under no circumstances should they offer recommendations or judge the farmers' responses. Any analysis should occur after the exercise during a designated "reflection" session (see below). Again, language or cross-cultural trainers should translate the responses verbatim, not interpret them. They should formulate follow-up questions without interpretation as best they can.

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## REFLECTION

Ideally, language and cross-cultural trainers and APCDs should discuss the interview activity with trainees. Did trainees learn to phrase questions that elicit the specific knowledge and perceptions that farmers have about the environment? Can they explain concepts about natural resource management that farmers have? If a formal reflection session is not held, trainees should find time, no matter where or when, to reflect on the interviews. They should reflect on what they learned and on how the experience might affect their upcoming work in development:

1. Was there anything about the interviews that surprised or intrigued you in a significant way?
2. If you could conduct the interviews again, what would you change, and why?
3. What did you appreciate most about your colleagues' questions and farmers' responses?
4. How did you feel prior to and during the interviews, and how do you feel now?
5. Other questions for reflection?

## NOTES

# 2 PST SESSION 2: DOING AN ACTIVITY — BIOPHYSICAL

## OVERVIEW

In this session, trainees will practice the community mentor activity taken from the Biophysical Environment section of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. They will then discuss what they learned from the activity, and consider learning strategies that they think will be successful for their community entry at their sites. Two points underlie the purpose of this session:

- The activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* can and should be adapted by trainees (and Volunteers) to suit their own interests and circumstances.
- Many trainees (and Volunteers) will find the community entry activities difficult at first. They might benefit from practicing with other trainees now, thinking of how they might adapt the activity to their own interests and discussing what works for them in terms of learning.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Each trainee will be able to describe how his or her mentor interacts with his or her environment.
2. Each trainee will be able to describe his or her own successful learning style and strategies.

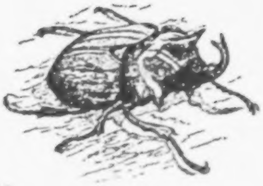
## TIME REQUIRED

Two hours for the activity. Two hours for reflection.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Trainees
- 1-3 language trainers or cross-cultural trainers for facilitation, to help with question formulation prior to the activity and at the reflection session
- Trainer/APCD to facilitate the reflection session

## TRAINER/TRAINEE PREPARATION



On their own, trainees should identify two or three people in the local community near or within (in the case of CBT) the training site whose work they find interesting. For example, these people could be a blacksmith, an onion grower, a traditional healer, a religious leader, or a school director. Prior to the day of the practice activity, trainees should introduce themselves to these people (one trainee per person) and arrange to spend a couple of hours with them as they work.

Similar to PST Session 1, trainees and language or cross-cultural trainers should work together in advance of this activity to prepare a set of questions that trainees, without translation, can ask their mentor. The questions should be relevant to the work of the people with whom they will spend time. Trainers should ask the trainees to refer to and use the community mentor activity in the Biophysical section of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* as a resource to guide this activity. Trainees may worry that they do not have sufficient language skills for this activity. They should understand that observation and spending time with their key informants are valid and valuable learning strategies too. Trainees should understand that they are in a learning mode, and should not offer recommendations or judge the work of their key informants.

## ACTIVITY PROCEDURE

1. This session follows the method described as the "community mentors" activity in the Biophysical Environment section of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. Trainees should have 15 questions ready to ask their mentor during a two-hour period. The questions asked by trainees of their key informant (mentor) will likely be different from the examples given in that guide. The questions should be relevant to their mentor's work. If the questions will be asked in a language other than English, the language trainers or cross-cultural trainers will need to assist the trainees in formulating them correctly. If trainees are in an English-speaking country and their mentor does not speak English, they should not use a translator. Rather, they need to communicate with their mentor in his or her language.

2. Trainees will spend time (two hours) with their individual key informant or mentor. They should use whichever language they can in order to learn about the work of their mentor, but no one should translate. Trainees do not need to stick to their script of prepared questions. It may be better to hold those questions in reserve for moments when asking them seems appropriate or timely. For this reason, it is important to learn phrases in local or national languages like "What is that?" or "How does this help you?" or "How do you use this?" or "How does that work?" There are many other simple questions that trainees should be able to come up with to evoke a significant response and yield a great deal of information.

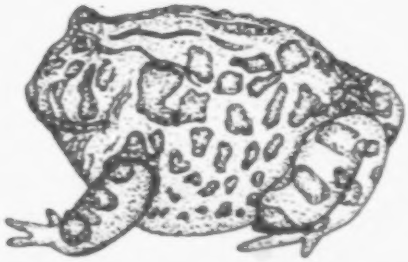
3. During the time with their mentor, trainees should pay close attention to the sights, sounds, and smells they encounter. They might also note the people who stop by to greet their mentor, and try to obtain a sense of what those particular interactions are about. Are they about work? Are they about family? It is best if trainees make mental notes of what they find interesting or confusing rather than take notes in a notebook, as that might make people uncomfortable.

## REFLECTION

Soon after their return from the community mentor activity, trainees should reflect on what happened, what they learned, and how they learned. Trainees should think about how their mentors interact with their environment in their work. Trainees should also think about the learning strategies they used (and enjoyed) to learn about their mentor. Trainers and APCDs can use these and other questions to guide the reflection process in small or large groups:

- How did you feel prior to, during, and right after the activity? How do you feel now?
- What did you learn about the work of your key informant?
- In what ways does your mentor interact with his or her environment?
- Which natural resources does your mentor use in his or her work?
- What do you admire in your key informant? What do you appreciate?
- What did you learn about your mentor (or anything else) through observation?
- What did you learn through language?
- What learning strategies worked best for you? Why?
- What didn't seem to work as well as you wanted? Why not?
- What do you think you would do differently with your next mentor experience?

## NOTES



# 3

# PST SESSION 3: DOING AN ACTIVITY — ECONOMIC

## OVERVIEW

In this session, trainees will practice the market survey activity taken from the Economic Environment section of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. They will then discuss what they learned from the activity, and consider learning strategies that they think will be successful for their community entry at their sites. Two points underlie the purpose of this session:

- Local markets are a key environmental locus of most communities' economic and social life and thus can serve new Volunteers well as a "living classroom" for community entry.
- By spending time in markets and building relationships with merchants and others, trainees can learn much about community livelihoods, social relationships, and what people value.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Trainees will be able to describe and characterize a local market environment and develop an informed hypothesis about the value of this market to various local livelihoods.
2. Trainees will be able to describe their own successful learning style and strategies with particular respect to informing themselves about a local economic environment.

## TIME REQUIRED

Two hours for the activity. Two hours for reflection.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Trainees
- 1-3 language trainers or cross-cultural trainers for facilitation, to help with question formulation prior to the activity and at the reflection session
- Trainer/APCD to facilitate the reflection session

## TRAINER/TRAINEE PREPARATION

Be sure that trainees understand the objectives of this activity (see above). As in PST Sessions 1 and 2, trainees and language or cross-cultural trainers should work together to prepare a set of questions that trainees can challenge themselves to answer. It is worthwhile in terms of language and cross-cultural learning to phrase these questions in languages other than English. Trainees should plan to pose some of the questions to various people in the market as a way for them to cross-check their own observations. Generally speaking, the questions should be based on the trainees' particular interests with respect to markets. To guide the formulation of their questions, trainees can refer to the market survey activity in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. This will also help trainees determine how to proceed with the activity. Trainees may worry that they do not speak the market language well enough to conduct the activity, so it is important for them to understand that observation is a valid learning strategy.

## ACTIVITY PROCEDURE

1. Trainees will spend time (two hours) in the market on their own. It is important that the trainees make every effort to work individually, however difficult that may seem. During the exercise, they should use whichever language they can in order to learn about the market, but no one should translate. Trainees should not stick to a script of prepared questions, but rather refer to their questions for moments when asking them seems appropriate or timely. For this reason, it is important to learn phrases in local or national languages like "What is that?" or "What is that used for?" or "Where does that come from?" or "How much does that cost?" Trainees need to be aware of being drawn into negotiations for products in the market that they have no desire at all to purchase! There are many other simple questions that trainees can think of to elicit a great deal of information from market people.

2. Encourage trainees to think about and focus on what interests them. Work with them to suggest ways to engage in the activity. For example, trainees might wish to discover:

   - Particular products that they have never seen before.
   - Sights, sounds, and smells that are provocative.
   - Interactions among people, behaviors, or events that are confusing or compelling.
   - Who is in the market? Who sells what? Where are they from?
   - Various natural resources for sale, their purpose, and where they come from.
   - Items that replace local products or services, such as plastic bowls, soap, fertilizers, pesticides, and what people used before these were available.
   - Sections of the market where particular ethnic groups or products predominate.

Tell trainees that they can engage in the activity in any way that is comfortable for them, but they should spend the entire two hours in the market. They may sit for the entire time with one person, walk around, accompany a host family member, etc. Trainees should refrain from taking notes in a notebook, but instead record their thoughts and learning afterward. They can try to make a mental map of the market and return home to draw the map from memory. Remind trainees that, above all, they can document their learning in any way they would like, and that they will be sharing this with the group during the reflection session.

## REFLECTION

Trainees should reconvene for the reflection session shortly after the activity, ideally the same day. Trainees should exchange strategies and ideas that worked for them. They should be encouraged to think about their own learning styles. This session should be a dialogue between participants and everyone should get a chance to speak about his or her experiences. Provide trainees with the following questions that they can use to guide their reflection process.

- How did you feel during the activity? How did you feel afterward? How do you feel now?
- What did you learn about what people value?
- What did you learn about the local economy?
- What did you learn about social relationships?
- What did you find interesting or confusing?
- What did you learn through observation?
- What did you learn through language?
- What learning strategies worked for you? What didn't seem to work?
- What do you think you would do differently with your next market experience?

## NOTES

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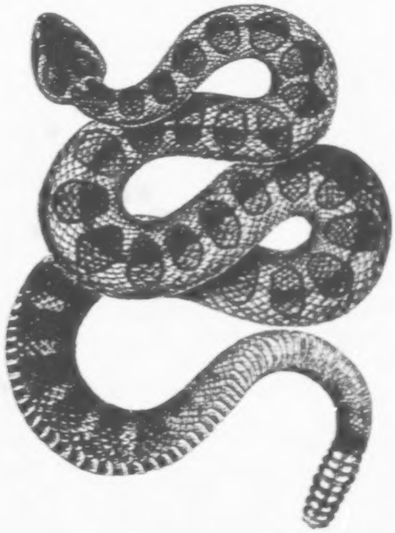

# QUARTERLY REPORTS, IN-SERVICE TRAINING, AND THE PROJECT FRAMEWORK

## QUARTERLY REPORTS AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The reflection questions at the end of each section in the community entry guide *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* are designed to help Volunteers clarify and direct their learning at their sites. Some of the questions are complex and require extensive thought by Volunteers about community dynamics and practices. To ensure that Volunteers devote sufficient attention to the reflection process, APCDs may want to use these questions as the basis for Volunteers' first quarterly reports. This idea is further addressed in the PST session plan designs.

## PROJECT FRAMEWORKS

APCDs will be able to review what new Volunteers have learned through the use of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* and make suggestions for development activities based on:

- The goals and objectives of the project plan.
- The interests and strengths of a Volunteer.
- The characteristics of a Volunteer's host community.

By reviewing together what Volunteers have learned during their first several months at site, APCDs and Volunteers can determine how Volunteers' understanding of their communities relates to the goals of the project framework. More specifically, APCDs can help clarify the link among project framework objectives, community realities, and possible Volunteer activities with reference to the Volunteers' learning that has occurred thus far. An example of how this might work can be found in the IST session plan designs.

## IST AND MUTUAL LEARNING

Asking Volunteers to present during IST what they have learned as a result of using the community entry guide will help to ensure that Volunteers have engaged in some of the activities suggested in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. Additionally, Volunteers will be able to enhance their learning and discuss development activity options by sharing their insights and experiences with other Volunteers, Peace Corps staff, and other IST participants. While all Volunteers should present their learning during IST, the presentation methods can vary among Volunteers. These presentations should reflect Volunteers' interests, creativity, and personality. Some Volunteers may want to present their findings orally; others may be comfortable doing a poster presentation. This idea is further discussed in the sections on PST and IST that follow.

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# 4 PST SESSION 4: *LEARNING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE* AND THE PROJECT FRAMEWORK

## OVERVIEW

At some point in their service, Volunteers are likely to ask themselves, or their APCDs, "What are we doing here?" One answer, especially applicable to the first several months of service, is that Volunteers are "here to learn." Two goals of the Peace Corps experience relate to cultural exchange. It is no coincidence that cross-cultural understanding is enhanced by practicing the community entry activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. The more Volunteers learn about the biophysical, economic, and social environment of their communities, and their cultural values, the more effectively they will be able to participate in local development action. It is also important that Volunteers grasp how their community entry learning relates to the objectives outlined in their project framework. The contribution that Volunteers make toward achieving those objectives is a primary reason "why they are there." The PST session described as follows is thus intended to help Volunteers map out their role in the development process.

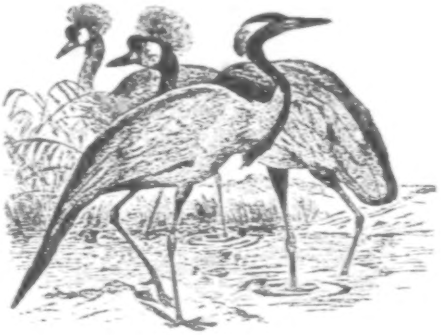
## OBJECTIVES

**1.** Trainees will be able to explain the goals and objectives described in the project framework.

**2.** Trainees will be able to explain their APCD's expectations for the initial quarterly report.

**3.** Trainees will explain how they will prepare for their initial IST, to occur within four months.

**4.** Trainees will explain how they will link certain activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* to effective implementation of one or more objectives in the project framework.



## TIME REQUIRED

2 hours

## PARTICIPANTS

- Trainees
- 1-3 language trainers or cross-cultural trainers for facilitation
- Trainer/APCD to facilitate the reflection session

## TRAINER/TRAINEE PREPARATION

APCDs should prepare their project framework and provide each trainee with a copy. The standard example in this training manual (see below) includes questions that Volunteers should consider in learning about their community's cultural values and livelihoods. These cultural and livelihood considerations should not be included in the framework that you give to the trainees. They will be asked to suggest considerations of their own related to their own forthcoming work.

## ACTIVITY PROCEDURE

1. After the APCD or technical trainer distributes to each trainee a copy of his or her project framework (not the example shown here), ask the trainees to read and study it for five to 10 minutes. Explain to the trainees that their work in their communities is expected to consist of implementing the activities outlined in the framework that they now have in their hands.

2. Tell trainees that the activities in their project framework may seem clear, but if they try to implement them right after entering the community based on what they learned in PST, their time may not be efficiently spent. Why not? Perhaps the trainees will offer reasons. Note these. The generally correct response, which some trainees offer, is that all communities will already be using practices and possess knowledge that will facilitate their work as Volunteers. Therefore, as new Volunteers, they need to engage themselves in learning about these practices and knowledge before trying to conduct the activities described in the framework.

3. Divide the trainees into small groups (three to five per group) and assign them several project plan activities to discuss. Ask the trainees to think about what they may need to know before trying to implement the project plan activities. Tell them to write down their ideas about this.

4. Also ask the trainees to imagine (and write down) the knowledge that might already exist in the community that would help them conduct their activities. The APCD/trainer should monitor the groups and provide guidance, if necessary, with reference to the questions attached in the sample project framework as needed.

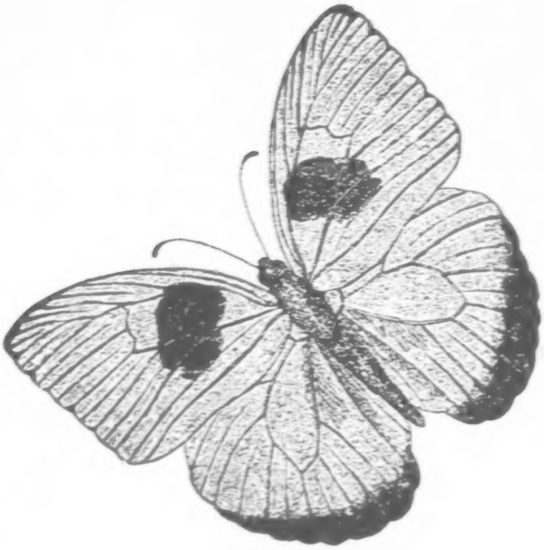
5. Each small group should work on exercises #3 and #4 (above) for about 45 minutes, and then present their ideas in a plenary session. Include time for questions and discussion.

## ADDITIONAL OPTIONS

- Before this session ends, make sure trainees understand that, at the IST in three to four months, they will present what they learn at their sites from using the community entry guide, *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. At that IST, new Volunteers can present their learning in any way they prefer (written, visual, artistic, oral) based on their own interests. The trainees should also understand that, in these IST presentations, they will be asked to focus on their community's biophysical, economic, and social environments, and how these are linked to local cultural values, and prospective development actions within the project framework.

- APCDs may wish to use the reflection questions located at the end of each section in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* as the basis for the first quarterly report. If so, APCDs need to be sure to prepare the trainees to write that report, and remind them periodically during their first couple of months of service.

## NOTES



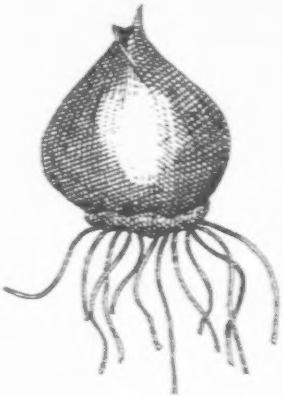
# TIPS AND TOOLS

## INTRODUCING THE PROJECT FRAMEWORK TO TRAINEES IN PST AND VOLUNTEERS IN IST

### INTRODUCTION

The project framework is the heart and soul of a project plan. It succinctly spells out the purpose, goals, and objectives of Volunteers' service in a particular country within a specific program sector. It articulates the types of activities that Volunteers should undertake and the desired results of those activities. Most important, the project framework is a living document that can be reviewed, discussed, and adjusted based on input from Volunteers and Counterparts in accordance with current circumstances and realities within the program sector and the host country. The final two or three weeks of Pre-Service Training is an ideal time to introduce the project framework to trainees. The initial In-Service Training, usually held three or four months after swearing in, is an opportune time to solicit ideas about modifying the project framework.

### BENEFITS: WHY INTRODUCE YOUR PROJECT FRAMEWORK TO TRAINEES AND VOLUNTEERS?



- Because Goal 1 of the Peace Corps suggests that Volunteers serve the needs of their host countries for a common purpose that we call *development*, which implies a process of *change*. The project framework is a plan to nurture change in the communities where Volunteers serve through collaborative activities that lead to observable or tangible results.

- Because the development results that Volunteers and their Counterparts work to achieve center on building human capacity at four levels: individual, service provider, organizational, and community. The goals articulated in a project framework reflect the plan to address the capacity of people at some or all of these levels to improve their lives.

- Because the work of Volunteers and their Counterparts to build capacity is strategic in nature. The goals that define a project framework are grounded in national strategies for long-term progress. While Volunteers serve for two or three years, the project framework helps them see how they contribute to the "big picture" of ongoing national development.

## ISSUES AND METHODS TO CONSIDER

### Pre-Service Training (PST)

- **The project framework can be largely theoretical** when discussed out of context. Testimonies given at the PST by first- and second-year Volunteers about their work with reference to project objectives can add a measure of reality to the framework.

- **Trainees will perceive the project framework in different ways**, finding it complex, boring, oversimplified, limiting, too expansive, etc. Discussion that centers on project activities may help trainees focus on work they could undertake in their communities. After their return from a visit to their future site, or another site, ask trainees to brainstorm some daily tasks they might undertake in support of the activities.

- **Trainees do not tolerate lecture formats** well, so anything interactive to introduce the project framework will be appreciated. You might give each trainee two or three cards with an activity, desired change, goal, or purpose statement written on them. Ask them to work in small teams to assemble the project framework in a competitive yet cooperative way. Advise the trainees that some of the statements may be "dummies" and should not be used.

- **Most Volunteers will work on one or two project objectives** and therefore, during training, trainees should consider the unique skills and interests they bring to their Peace Corps service, and try to match these with at least one project activity presented in the framework.

### In-Service Training (IST)

- **Volunteers at the initial IST can formulate plans of action** based on community needs, assets, project objectives, and their own skills and interests. This information and the data obtained from conducting the exercises in PACA or *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge: A Volunteer's Guide to Community Entry*, can constitute the Volunteers' first report.

- **Present the periodic report form to Volunteers at the reconnect IST**, noting how the questions asked relate to the project framework. Ask Volunteers to do their first report right there at the IST based on the experiences they have had thus far at site. The Volunteers can share this information in small and large groups at the IST. Point out that subsequent reports should contain information about the project activities the Volunteers undertake, as well as the effects the activities are having on changes in people's behavior, skills, and knowledge.

- **Use project design and management (PDM) sessions** at the reconnect IST to guide Volunteers and their counterparts in fashioning a community-specific project that will contribute to the larger effort outlined in the project framework.

- **Spice the PDM sessions with project management exercises** to give Volunteers and their Counterparts the skills, confidence, and self-identity of being project guides (Volunteers) and managers (Counterparts). This makes the design exercises less tedious and frustrating, and more meaningful.

## PROJECT FRAMEWORK EXAMPLE:
## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

### Project Purpose

Individuals and families in urban and rural areas will lead healthier lifestyles because of their knowledge and use of new skills and best practices in local environmental resource management.

### Project Goal

Community members, young people in particular, will change their behavior in positive ways to conserve and regenerate their local, regional, and national environment.

| **Activities**<br>**What major activities will Volunteers and their community partners do?** | **Desired Change**<br>**What knowledge, attitudes, skills, or behaviors are expected to change because of these activities?** |
|---|---|
| 1.1 By (YEAR), Volunteers and their Counterparts will design and implement environmental education activities for 5,000 young people in formal and informal settings. | 1.1 This will result in 4,000 young people who are able to demonstrate knowledge about local, national, and international environmental issues and who are able to make better decisions about managing their local environment. |
| 1.2 By (YEAR), Volunteers and their Counterparts will provide training in environmental education (content, techniques, and methodology) to 1,000 youth leaders, teachers, and nongovernment organization professionals. | 1.2 This will result in 500 of these participants actively implementing applied environmental education programs (learning plus action) in their communities. |
| 1.3 By (YEAR), Volunteers and their Counterparts will develop applied environmental education training materials. | 1.3 This will result in the use of improved training materials by 200 formal and nonformal organizations. |
| 1.4 By (YEAR), Volunteers and their Counterparts will design and implement two environmental education projects, geared to involve the entire community, in 100 communities. | 1.4 This will result in 75 communities modifying their local infrastructure for managing natural resources in a systematic and constructive way. |
| 1.5 By (YEAR), Volunteers and their Counterparts will provide training in technical practices in natural resource conservation and environmental health to 200 environmental organizations. | 1.5 This will result in the incorporation of these technical practices into the natural resource management and environmental health programs of 100 environmental organizations. |

### EXAMPLES OF CULTURAL AND LIVELIHOOD CONSIDERATIONS

**Biophysical**

- What geographic characteristics do community members identify to determine the best site for various land uses?
- What local natural resource management sites can be used in trainings to illustrate successful conservation action?
- What tree seed species do men and women farmers prefer to collect, store, and use? Why these species?

**Economic**

- How do workshop participants relate environmental conservation to livelihood security?
- What do local people feel are the benefits of and constraints to adopting environmental conservation practices?
- How can the community build on what local people already do to conserve natural resources, e.g. water?

**Social**

- What traditional beliefs do people have that serve the goals of environmental conservation?
- Are water harvesting techniques perceived to be a communitywide or individual family responsibility?
- Which men and women are advocates for conservation in the community; how can they contribute to the trainings?

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# IN-SERVICE TRAINING SESSION DESIGNS

The overall purpose of these particular IST sessions is to discuss how the learning experiences that new Volunteers gained during their community entry phase of service can be applied to the formulation of individualized plans of action. These plans should be based on the use and availability of community assets, the expression of community needs and visions for the future, the project framework objectives, and the interests of Volunteers, Counterparts, and community members and groups. These IST session plans, which are linked directly to Volunteers' use of the community entry guide *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*, are designed to stimulate a discussion of how Volunteer learning can contribute to development activities in the community. Ideally, some community partners should be present to observe, comment, and advise Volunteers on their action plans. The following two sessions require five to six hours.

# 1

# IST SESSION 1: VOLUNTEER PRESENTATIONS AND REVIEWS

## OVERVIEW

In this session, Volunteers will organize and present what they learned about their community through use of the community entry guide, and review what the other Volunteers learned. Volunteers will make presentations on the activities they did and select a few reflection questions that highlight what they learned. Trainers and APCDs may want to advise trainees/Volunteers in advance of IST of the content of these presentations, perhaps when details of the IST are sent to them.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Volunteers will be able to describe how their Volunteer colleagues used the activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* to facilitate their community entry.
2. Volunteers will be able to cite at least three examples of environmental knowledge that other Volunteers acquired from use of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*.
3. Volunteers will be able to explain how other Volunteers recognized local community assets that will contribute to realization of the project framework objectives.

## TIME REQUIRED

1/2 day (3-4 hours)

## PARTICIPANTS

Volunteers; training staff/APCD; community partners (not necessarily limited to Counterparts)

## TRAINER/VOLUNTEER PREPARATION

Volunteers will prepare for this IST session by using the activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* during their first several months of service (prior to the IST). APCDs should have told trainees that their presentations should illustrate through words or pictures:

1. The activities they conducted.

**2.** The environmental knowledge they acquired. **NOTE**: Tell Volunteers to choose three examples of knowledge they learned from conducting activities suggested in any of the three sections of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge.*

**3.** Local assets they discovered useful to implementing project plan objectives.

Volunteers should be encouraged to be as creative as they would like in their presentations, utilizing oral and visual methods of presentation.

## ACTIVITY PROCEDURE

Divide Volunteers into small discussion groups to present and review their learning. If community partners are present, they should participate in these discussions. Volunteers, however, should facilitate the presentations. No group should be larger than six people (e.g., three Volunteers, three partners) but could be as small as three Volunteers if no partners are present.

## REFLECTION

Ask Volunteers to reflect on the following questions:

- How has your understanding of local environmental knowledge changed based on what you have seen and heard in the presentations of other Volunteers?

- Is there anything that you thought you had understood about local environmental knowledge that you are now less certain about?

- What other biophysical, economic, or social elements of environmental knowledge do you think you would like to further explore when you return to your site?

- What did you learn today from other Volunteers or community partners that is particularly extraordinary and inspiring?

## NOTES

# 2 IST SESSION 2: REVIEW OF QUARTERLY REPORTS

## OVERVIEW

In this session, Volunteers will discuss the content of their first quarterly reports. Volunteers who have used the reflection questions in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* as the basis for their first quarterly report should, for their part in the discussion, pick one or two issues that emerged from the biophysical, economic, or social activities that they conducted. Their selection of which issues to focus on should be based on how their new knowledge will influence their contribution to development activities in their communities. All of the discussion should ensue with reference to the objectives in their project framework. Volunteers who did not use the community entry guide can participate in the discussion by reacting to and reflecting on what their colleagues have learned. If none or the vast majority of the new Volunteers did not use the community entry guide, of course, this IST session will not likely be an effective training tool.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Volunteers will be able to explain what their colleagues have learned about which biophysical, social, and economic issues are likely keys to effective and efficient development action in their respective communities.

2. Volunteers will be able to cite which elements of each quarterly report submitted by their colleagues are similar and different (i.e., a compare and contrast exercise), and how the common elements that Volunteers share can contribute in a broad way to realization of the objectives written in the project framework. **NOTE:** One possible outcome related to this objective is suggested modifications by Volunteers to the project framework.

## TIME REQUIRED

2 hours

## PARTICIPANTS

Volunteers, trainer/APCD

## TRAINER/VOLUNTEER PREPARATION

Volunteers will prepare for this session by completing their initial quarterly reports based on the reflection questions *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. Trainers and APCDs need to remind the trainees/ Volunteers near the end of PST and again during their first month at their sites that the IST will be based in part on their use of the community entry guide and completion of the first quarterly report. Trainers and the APCD should prepare by thoroughly reviewing the quarterly reports prior to this session.

## ACTIVITY PROCEDURE

Divide Volunteers into small discussion groups of three to six people. Each Volunteer should choose at least one but not more than three important observations related to biophysical, social, or economic environmental knowledge they made when considering the reflection questions. These observations should have been included in their first quarterly report as well. Volunteers should explain how these observations led to which conclusions about how the environment and people's livelihood are linked, and how this will affect their own contribution to community development action, relative to the project framework. The trainer or APCD should visit the groups to offer guidance or clarification as needed. This exercise should take no more than one hour. The Volunteers can present their findings in plenary during the session's second hour.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

To further stimulate thought and discussion, ask Volunteers to consider the following questions:

- What conclusions made by other Volunteers had you not considered, but now will?
- What are the major biophysical, economic, and social issues that appear to be common to most if not all Volunteers and their partners working within the project framework?
- As compared to other Volunteers, what is largely different or unique about the issues faced by your community with regard to implementing the project framework?

## NOTE: THE LINK TO PACA

Although the publication *Participatory Analysis for Community Action* (PACA) has been used as a community entry tool in the past, it may be better used as a tool for identifying areas for development intervention at about the fourth month of Volunteer service. PACA activities may make more sense and be more valuable to Volunteers after they have engaged in the activities in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*. Thus, depending on the program strategy of the APCD, PACA can be introduced during the IST sessions, rather than during PST, as a way for Volunteers to further clarify the direction of the development action to which they will contribute. Because *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* focuses on general learning throughout the community, rather than assessment, Volunteers will gain a broader base of community knowledge by using the community entry guide, and will thus be better able to understand the information that emerges from the PACA activities. There are already Peace Corps PACA training materials readily available to Volunteers, so they are not covered in this training manual.

# VOLUNTEER EVALUATION OF *LEARNING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE*

**To be completed by Volunteers at IST**

1. Which activities did you use in *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*?

2. Which activities were your favorites? Why?

3. Which activities were your least favorites? Why?

4. How did the guide help you learn about the community?

5. How did the guide help you learn language?

6. Was the guide adaptable to your circumstances? If not, why not?

7. How would you change the guide?

8. Would you recommend that future Volunteers use the guide? If not, why not?

# APCD/TRAINER EVALUATION OF *LEARNING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE*

## VOLUNTEER GUIDE

1. Do you think that the learning activities helped Volunteers adjust to their communities more quickly than they might have otherwise? Why or why not?

2. Do you think that use of *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* promotes a good foundation for subsequent development activities? Why or why not?

3. Have the reflection questions served as a good basis for quarterly reports? Why or why not?

4. Do you think that *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* promotes language learning? Why or why not?

5. How would you like to change *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge*?

## TRAINING MANUAL

1. Did you find the training manual helpful in introducing *Learning Local Environmental Knowledge* to Volunteers? Why or why not?

2. Were you able to integrate some of the training sessions into the already existing framework of PST and IST? How?

3. Were the sessions helpful to increasing trainee/Volunteer understanding of the project framework?

4. How would you change the training manual to make it more effective?

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EFF-089 (1/2003)